BBC

INSIDE! Ramadan mini-mag

GoodFood

July 2014
DHS15 | QR15

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MIDDLE EAST

WIN! Trip to Thailand, Weekend break & Iftar vouchers



Bake with *berries & cherries!*

ARE YOU KEEPING YOUR FAMILY SAFE?

Food safety tips from the experts

GO ON A *DIET DETOX* IN AUSTRIA

Become a domestic goddess

Homemade jams and ice creams made easy

FREE RECIPE SUPPLEMENT

The Arabic Kitchen

From traditional recipes to contemporary dishes, it's all here!

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RAMADAN EXPERIENCES

This Ramadan, spend time with your loved ones and surround yourself in authentic traditions as Origins transforms into the perfect venue for unforgettable moments. Enjoy Iftar and Sohour, indoors or in a unique air-conditioned tent on the terrace, complete with a shisha and cigar lounge.

Iftar | Daily, sunset to 9:00pm
AED 195* | *including Ramadan beverages*

Sohour | Daily, 9:30pm to 2:00am
À la carte menu available



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BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

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Welcome!



I first noticed it when my darling husband came to fetch me from the airport, the chronic cough that just seemed to be an inescapable part of his being. I hadn't heard that sound in a while. And it was when I tuned into this, and the various other coughing, sneezing, wheezing and sniffling sounds from people around me at the airport that I realised that these were sounds I hadn't heard at all in the last few days. While I'd been cloistered up in the Viva Mayr clinic, I hadn't heard or seen a single person battling the common ailments typical of everyday modern life – everyone there seemed to be radiating wellbeing and positivity!

That was a moment of epiphany for me, as I realised how we tend to take for granted the health issues that we think we have to learn to live with. But do we? I came back from the clinic having learned some revelatory life lessons about health and food, and how every choice we make about what we put into our bodies and how we do it, has an impact – both immediate as well as long-term. Viva Mayr doesn't offer a magic, fix-all cure for all ills, but it most certainly helps take a step in the right direction. Read all about my experience in *Thought for food*, p76. Everyone I've met who has been there swears by their 'cure', but I leave it to you to decide if it's for you or not.

One of their fundamental principles is giving the body a good cleanse with a detox diet. There are many cultures that propagate this in various ways, incorporating fasting into a context of faith or religion. Take Ramadan, for instance. It is indeed a time for spirituality, but it is as much a time to take stock of health. Sadly, for many, Ramadan turns into an unhealthy cycle of fasting and indiscriminate feasting.

Don't let that happen to you this year. This is a fantastic opportunity to give your health an annual reboot, so seize it with both hands. Even if you are not required to fast for religious reasons, embrace the spirit of Ramadan – it doesn't have to be a full-day fast, it could be a gentle detox, or simply an excuse to start implementing healthier food choices.

Not to take away from the gastronomic joys of Ramadan – this is, after all, the time of year when many of us get a chance to indulge in traditional Arabic delicacies we normally wouldn't be eating. Enjoy them, but in moderation. You'll find plenty of inspiration in our *Ramadan Special* feature, so go ahead and cook up an Arabian storm!

And above all, remember to make the most of this month by cleansing your body and soul. Ramadan Kareem!

Sudeshna

Editor's picks



This tray trolley gives me a nostalgia hit – my grandmother used something similar! P32



These gourmet Garrett popcorns have me converted – perfect for summer movie marathons! p51



The Viva Mayr clinic is a fave with celebrities for a reason! p76

BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

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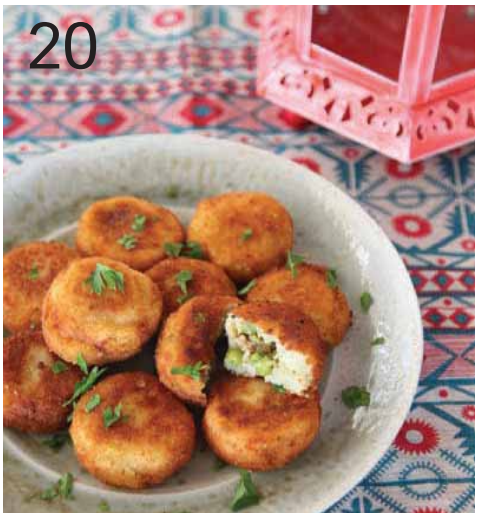
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WIN!

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Our recipe descriptions

V Suitable for vegetarians
❄ You can freeze it
Not suitable for freezing
Easy Simple recipes even beginners can make
A little effort These require a bit more skill and confidence – such as making pastry
More of a challenge Recipes aimed at experienced cooks
Low fat 12g or less per portion
Low cal 500 calories or less per main.
Superhealthy Low in saturated fat, 5g or less per portion; low in salt, 1.5g or less; and at least one of the following: provides one-third or more of your daily requirement of fibre, iron, calcium, folic acid and/or vitamin C, or counts at least one portion of your recommended 5-a-day fruit and veg.
Good for you Low in saturated fat, low in salt.
Heart healthy Low in saturated fat, with 5g or less, and low in salt, with 1.5g or less, and high in omega-3 fatty acids
1 of 5-a-day The number of portions of fruit and/or veg contained in a serving
Vit C **Iron** **Omega-3** **Calcium** **Folate** **Fibre**
Indicating recipes that are good sources of useful nutrients
GLUTEN FREE Indicates a recipe is free from gluten

Some recipes contain pork & alcohol. These are clearly marked and are for non-Muslims only. Look for these symbols:
P Contains pork
Contains alcohol

Store Directory

Contact numbers for outlets featured in this issue

2XL Furniture: 04-2888071
Ace: 04-3411906
Angelina: 04-4429112
Biorganic: 04-4433535
Bloomingdale's-Dubai: 04-3505333
Candelite: 04-3631602
C. Wonder: 04-4099000
Desert River: 04-3233636
Ethan Allen: 04-3308871
Harvest Home: 04-3420225
Homebox: 06-5236766
Lakeland: 04-3236081
Pan Emirates Furniture: 04-3830800
Sauce Gifts: 04-3883488
Tavola: 04-3402933
Villeroy and Boch: 04-3399676

Note: Prices in Qatari Riyals are approximately the same as UAE Dirhams.

Your say

We love to hear from you!

LEARNING CURVE



If it was entirely up to me, I would have mussels every day. But the restaurant kinds were getting too boring for me and cooking them myself seemed like a herculean task! That was until I saw the May issue of *BBC Good Food ME*. Unlike other magazines that focus on recipes and hotels alone, the Chef Skills section (*Learn to cook mussels*, May 2014) that gave a detailed step-by-step instruction guide on how to cook mussels was priceless to me. This along with the super easy recipe made my weekend! It was a pleasure to paste the instruction page on my fridge door and go about the kitchen like a professional. This magazine is a keeper!

Arjun Jayraj

A HIT WITH THE FAMILY

Just wanted to say that this entire month, our grocery shopping has been done according to the May issue, and all the one-pot dishes (*One-pot Wonders*) are such a hit with my kids – the younger one refuses to eat anything else and always ask for second helpings.



Ishita Saha

Win!

The winner of the Star Letter gets a **Bamix SwissLine stand mixer** worth **Dhs1,100,** which includes three blade attachments and also has a wet and dry grinder (processor). The gadget also has a 900ml polycarbonate jug, and can be used directly in a cooking pot or pan, to make soups. Available at **Tavola stores** across the UAE and Qatar.



Star Letter

REGULAR READER



I always bought *BBC Good Food ME* when I lived in Dubai and it was such a nice surprise when I found it in Qatar – now that I am living here. Every issue has a dedicated page on Doha which is so appealing. Thank you for including us readers outside UAE. I was also very intrigued to find that there are competitions for Qatar residents, although I have not yet come across some of the products you have featured. This makes your publication stand out since most of the magazines that reach here from UAE, ignore overseas readers although they have the territory in their distribution list.

I always try recipes from every issue and now my collection has grown so much that it is always hard to decide which recipes to cook for the week! That said, I am going to try the recipes from the Home Cooking section. Keep up the good work put into each issue.

Gretel Busuttil

TRAVEL IDEAS



I am very grateful to *BBC Good Food ME* for the *Adventures for the Gourmet Globe-Trotter* feature in the June issue. It truly is a blessing for frequent travellers. When travelling I am usually left wandering and hunting for the irresistible flavors that tantalise my taste buds. This column will definitely provide me with guidance especially for my next trip. I hope this culinary journey and exploration of inspirational and mouthwatering treats from around the globe will continue.

Sobia Nisar Ahmed

FRUITFUL READ



My copy has just arrived and my mouth is watering reading it! I have an addiction to tomatoes so the *5 ways with tomatoes* is perfect for me.

Chloë Geake

From our social media pages

- That lentil and sweet potato curry in the June issue looks amazing - definitely making it! - *Rupal Bhatikar*
- Must stop reading e-mailers from *BBC Good Food ME* under pretext of reading work emails #nomnomnom – *Dhara*
- *BBC Good Food ME* take great care in creating content based on our daily life requirements, how do I know this? A fab chat with their editor – *Dima Sharif*

TALK TO US!

Email us on feedback@bbcgoodfoodme.com with your thoughts and comments, and send us your photos with your copy of BBC Good Food ME!

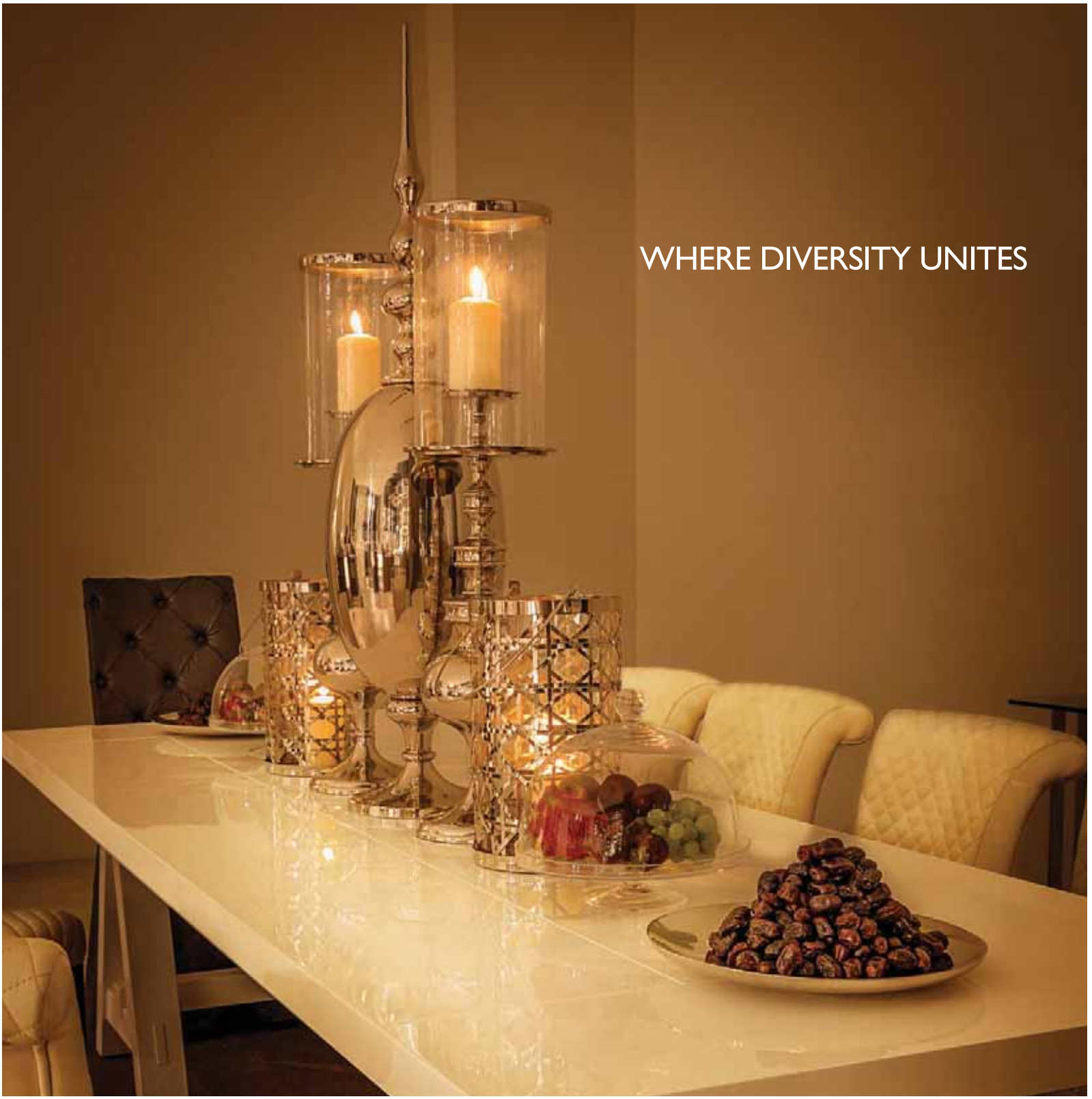
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Foodie file

What's hot and happening in the culinary world, here and around the globe.



Lemonade



Bushman's Restaurant & Bar

DINE IN THE CITY

THREE FAB NEW RESTAURANTS TO CHECK OUT

We Love!

✳ Get a taste of Bush Tucker, or Aboriginal tribal food from Australia, at Bushman's Restaurant and Bar, Anantara Dubai The Palm Resort and Spa. The menu at this Australian restaurant infuses flora, spices, and meat and seafood from the outback in all dishes – think kangaroo meat, and tempura bay bugs (a tender, juicy crustacean) on lemon grass skewers. The deconstructed pavlova meringue with wattle seed mousse – prepared on the table – is a must-try! Call 04-5678888.

✳ Looking for healthy options while shopping? South Californian restaurant chain, Lemonade, has opened its doors at China Court in Ibn Batuta Mall. The menu features organic brown rice pasta, citrus poached salmon, and red miso beef short ribs. Call 800 Lemonade (53366623).

✳ The Clinton Baking Street Compay, a popular New York eatery, in the Burj Views Downtown Dubai area, is shaping up to be Dubai's latest hotspot. Head there to try their pancakes, eggs benedict and fried chicken on waffle with a touch of hot sauce. Call 04-4281331.



This just in:

Serve dates or a selection of fruits in Virgule Collection's Small Two-Bird Bowl. Dhs195 at virguleshop.com.

2.5 BILLION PEOPLE depend on agriculture around the world – according to The Global Forum of Agricultural Research (GFAR).



Edible prints

Forget orchards, now you can print your own fruit! A new 3D printer from UK-based company Dovetailed uses a molecular gastronomy technique called spherification – building pieces of fruit in a solution of calcium chloride to make droplets to form a fruit shape. The fruit is made from a flavoured gel of mixed fruit juices and powdered sodium alginate, a gel-like substance. It's a great way of changing the colour, appearance and texture of fruits such as raspberries and black currants. The printer is available not only for professional kitchens, but home use as well – if you can afford it, that is – but we don't think it' s going to replace the weekly grocery shop anytime soon!

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photograps SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

#What's trending

#Ramadan
Now that the Holy Month is here, everyone's thinking about Ramadan food and cooking. BCom Council recently released a poster on reducing food wastage, while hotels are posting pictures of their Iftar spreads. Foodies are also tweeting about looking forward to Ramadan cooking, and unique Ramadan-inspired recipes.

Home

NEXT STOP: HONG KONG

Gordon Ramsay and Jamie Oliver have both confirmed new restaurant openings in the city. The Hell's Kitchen host will be opening his London outpost, Bread Street Kitchen, at Lan Kwai Fong in September, while Jamie is set to open the iconic Jamie's Italian on Tang Lung Street. Looks like Honk Kong is about to become the next celebrity chef restaurant hub.

"The most remarkable thing about my mother is that for thirty years she served the family nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found."

- American food writer Calvin Trillin



Big news for DUBAI AIRPORT

If you aren't a fan of airline food – unless it's created by a celebrity chef on first or business class, of course! – you will be delighted to hear about the new line-up of restaurants and cafés at Dubai International Concourse D, opening in the first quarter of 2015. Expect a casual dining concept from celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck, the first Camden Food Company outlet, and Butlers chocolate café, among many other restaurants and shops.

COOL DOWN

Looking for a gluten-free, all-natural, and low-fat treat to indulge in this summer? Yogurtland, a self-service yogurt stand from the US, has recently launched at Dubai Mall. This season's hot new flavours are salted caramel pecan, raspberry pomegranate tart and taro – healthy and delicious!



RAMADAN NIGHTLIFE

July 17-27 Ramadan Night Market at Dubai World Trade Centre

The Holy Month is when the city truly comes to life after-hours, so get into the Ramadan spirit at this annual market where you can enjoy an evening full of dining, activities and shopping. The Ramadan Night Market takes place from 8pm-2am daily, and will showcase everything from food samplings to perfume, toys and electronics. It's a great place to shop for Eid gifts too! Free entry for all, visit ramadannightmarket.com.

Ramadan Celebrations
at the JW Marriott Marquis Dubai.

Gather this Holy Month with family and friends around authentic cuisine in a range of incredible settings.

Dubai Ballroom
Dubai Ballroom invites to share Iftar and Sohour with loved ones, while shisha is being served and live Oud players are creating a special ambience.
IFTAR AED 195 PER PERSON, FROM SUNSET UNTIL 8.30PM
SOHOUR SERVED A LA CARTE, FROM 9PM

Kitchen6
Experience an international Iftar in the award-winning restaurant, featuring 6 live cooking stations.
AED 195 PER PERSON, FROM SUNSET UNTIL 9.30PM

Nawwara
Enjoy an evening of elegance at Nawwara, introducing a signature served Iftar.
AED 195 PER PERSON, FROM SUNSET UNTIL 9PM

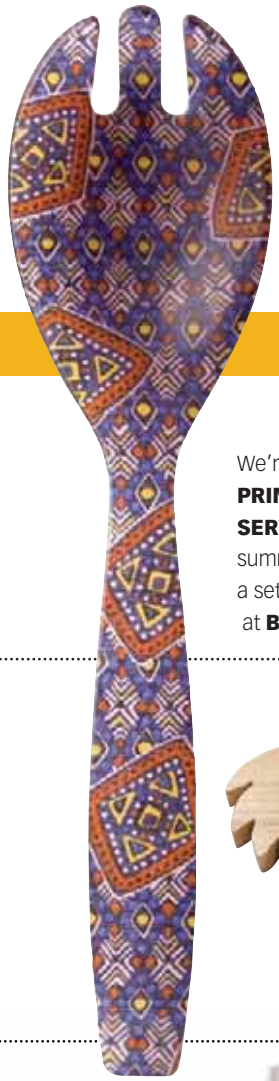


For reservations or inquiries, please contact mhrs.dxbjw.restaurant.reservation@marriott.com, call +971 4 414 3000 or visit jwmarriottmarquisdubailife.com

JW MARRIOTT MARQUIS DUBAI

Aisle file

Gorgeous gourmet buys, kitchen gear, home décor and more.



We're using this **PRINTED SALAD SERVING SET** to toss our summer salads. Dhs120 for a set of two at **BITSANDPIECES.AE**.

It's all about prints and bright colours this season, and we've fallen in love with popular Indian artist Jamini Roy's prints, on these **NATIVE NUKKAD VILLAGE PLACEMATS**, which are sure to spark up a conversation! Dhs100 at **FACEBOOK.COM/NATIVENUKKAD**.





Put out a lovely spread of brie, blue cheese, emmental and camembert on this **CRAB-SHAPED CHEESEBOARD**. Dhs175 at **C WONDER**.



Make the perfect cup of coffee with the **CHEMEX3 COFFEE MAKER** – super stylish for office tables too! Dhs179 at **CRATE AND BARREL**.

This nifty **USB HEART LUNCH BOX** is the ultimate gadget for office lunch – simply connect the usb to your computer and keep food and snacks warm while you work. Sheer genius! Dhs92 at **WAMLI.COM**.





We're swapping our regular lemon squeezer for this stylish **JUICER WITH BIRD FEATURE** that's pretty enough to keep on dsiplay. Dhs140 at **SAUCE GIFTS**.



Create a traditional majlis-style setting at home by laying out this **FATBOY PICNIC LOUNGE CARPET**. Throw in a few cushions and you're all set for an Iftar or Suhoor gathering. Dhs1,299 at **DESERT RIVER**.

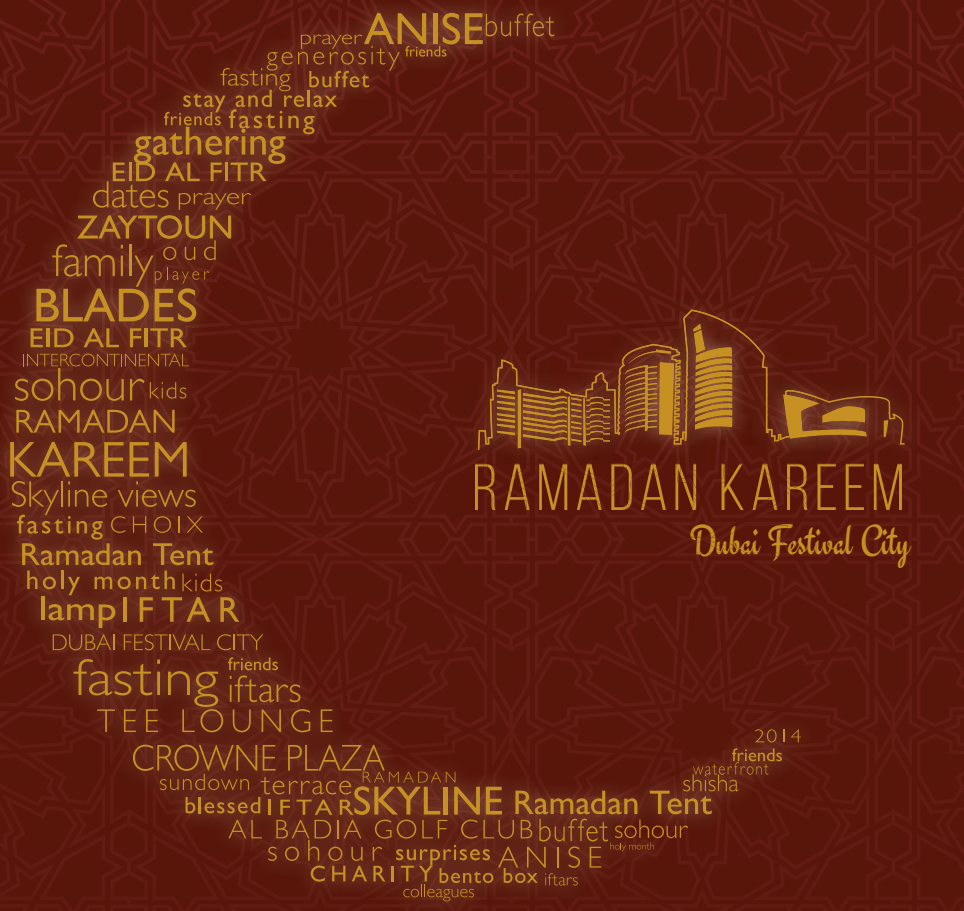


These **ARTSY CERAMIC COASTERS** are sure to give your dining table a contemporary look. Dhs180 at **VIRGULE-SHOP.COM**.



Make your kitchen an eco-friendly space by using this **COLOURFUL BASKET STAND** as a recycling bin for paper or dry waste. Dhs7 at **DAISO**.

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH, SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED



PERFECT WAYS TO CELEBRATE RAMADAN

InterContinental Hotels Group Dubai Festival City brings you an array of wonderful surprises. From lavish Iftar buffets and sohour in a truly Arabian setting to special room packages and indulgent spa offerings at InterContinental, Crowne Plaza and Al Badia Golf Club, join us for a celebration with your family and friends. For group iftar bookings to host 50 to 800 guests, our stunning ballroom and function rooms are available. For a more private celebration, we can accommodate 30 to 150 guests at Al Badia Golf Club, starting from **AED 160** per person.

Anise at InterContinental Dubai Festival City: Sunset - 10pm
AED 195 per person, including Ramadan juices, tea, coffee and soft beverages

Zaytoun and Skyline Ramadan Tent at Crowne Plaza Dubai Festival City: Sunset - 9pm
AED 195 per person, including Ramadan juices, tea, coffee and soft beverages

Blades & The Tee Lounge at Al Badia Golf Club by InterContinental Dubai Festival City: Sunset - 9:30pm
AED 175 per person, including Ramadan juices, tea, coffee and soft beverages

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CROWNE PLAZA
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Here to help

Our expert chef Andy Campbell offers practical advice to tackle all your cooking dilemmas.



Q I'm confused by the various pasta shapes – do they make any difference to a dish at all?

A. People tend to buy the pasta shape they prefer, but the shape does affect the flavour of a pasta dish. For example, penne adheres well to the consistency of tomato or meat ragu style of sauces, while orecchiette sticks well to creamy sauces. I like to have angel hair pasta with a delicate shellfish sauce.

Q Could you please tell me which herbs can be used in juices?

A. I love adding various herbs to juices as they have health benefits and taste great as well. I use mint and basil in just about any juice, as they grow plentifully in my garden. You can used dried, fresh and even frozen herbs.

Q I've been seeing cocoa butter in desserts – is there a particular way of using it and can it be heated up? Please give me your tips on how to use it?

A. It is becoming quite a trend to use cocoa butter as it makes desserts creamier in texture. I like to melt cocoa butter on a double boiler or bain marie, and then add cocoa powder to it. I then sweeten it with coconut sugar and blend it all together before freezing in ice trays. I like to eat these on its own, as you would with chocolate squares.

Q My husband is vegetarian and I always struggle with creative yet quick recipes for him. What is your go-to vegetarian dish?

A. Stir fries are super easy to make and take hardly any time. I make a stir fry of tinned pulses and beans, chickpeas and lentils with onions, celery, and carrot, cooked for 10 minutes in canola oil and thickened with tomato purée. Add smoked paprika and finish with chopped herbs and a squeeze of lemon. This tastes great with caramelised pears.



Q I boiled potatoes the other day and they were still hard in the middle – the same happened when I baked it. What am I doing wrong?

A. The best way to find out if a potato is baked or cooked is to check it with a small thin knife. Pierce it all the way through the centre and if it comes out clean it's cooked. Always boil old potatoes in cold water, and new potatoes in boiling water.

Andy's ingredient of the month

My favourite summer fruit is watermelon, and I use it in everything from fresh juices, to salads and curries. Watermelon has 92 per cent water content and is rich in vitamins A and C, as well as potassium. Eat it fresh or in vegetable curries.



Menu planner

Whip up a delicious meal with recipes from this issue

A Suhoor family gathering



A light, fresh couscous with courgette, onions and herb salad celebrates Arabian flavours, p53



Seasonal marrow is tasty in this baked Amatriciana avatar, p47



Steak can be low-calorie too, when it's lean and cooked with a celery and red pepper caponata, p42



Offering a taste of the traditional, this Rice pudding is cooling and light, p22

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs PHOTOS.COM

On test: Kitchen gadgets

We review some of the latest appliances on the market.



Philips Avance Collection Air-Fryer XL

The air-frying technology seems to have taken the culinary world by storm since it arrived, promising to make healthier eating possible for fans of deep-fried food. An air-fryer works on the principle of rapidly moving hot air around to produce results that are similar to frying – with a fraction of the fat used. Originally intended to make chips (or French fries) it is also useful for proper cooking, for things like chicken for instance.

What we liked: The sleek, minimalist gadget doesn't come with an instruction manual, just a small leaflet – and that's all the instruction its usage needs. With a small control panel that beeps, with power, temperature and timer settings, anyone with half a brain can figure out how to use it. The main cooking unit is a fryer-style basket with a pull-out handle, in which you throw in your fresh sliced potatoes, drizzle over a spoonful of oil (no oil required if you're using frozen), and turn it on to the recommended time and temperature – which is clearly marked on the body. Voila, 20 odd minutes later, hot, golden chips are ready! Admittedly, they don't have the sinful crunchy taste of real fried chips, but it does come quite close. For people that enjoy chips regularly, this really is a must-have to start eating a bit lighter.

What we didn't like: It's rather bulky and large, and considering its relative limitations in terms of applications (for example, we tried making sweet potato chips in it, but they turned out dry and rubbery) it's not really suitable for smaller kitchens.

To buy: Dhs1,199 at Al Ghandi Electronics.



Dole Yonanas Healthy Dessert Maker

Healthy desserts can be made in minutes with this innovative appliance. Basically a blender that blitzes frozen fruit to turn them into a dessert, the gadget comes in two parts, the main blender and a funnel which needs to be fixed onto the main piece, plus a pusher.

What we liked: From start to finish, the gadget was extremely easy to use. All you have to do is place the frozen fruit into the plunger, press it down with the pusher, and watch the blended fruit come out as a frozen yoghurt-style dessert. We were pleased with the results, although the dessert wasn't completely smooth – more like a little lumpy smoothie, which, luckily we like! It's easy to clean, compact, and child-friendly as well (all the blades are inside), and is a great for experimenting with various frozen fruit (think berries, mangoes, bananas).

To buy: Dhs299, at leading UAE supermarkets and electronic stores.

Krampouz Domino Round Crêpe Maker

We are used to making crêpes on a flat pan, but this crêpe maker is definitely the gadget of choice for those who like paper thin crêpes. The stylish, compact gadget is essentially a hot-plate, and comes with a patented spreader, measured ladle, wooden spatula and rake, brush, water tray and recipe book.

What we liked: The machine is easy to use – all you have to do is pour the batter on the plate when the light switches on and indicates it's hot enough to use. You can choose how crispy you want it with the adjustable thermostat (settings range from one to eight); the mid-range option is best for slightly crispy crêpes that are ready in about five minutes, and come off smoothly from the non-stick plate, ready to top and eat!

What we didn't like: The patented spreader is quite flimsy – use the wooden spatula. Since it's quite limited in its uses, this appliance probably only makes sense for someone who likes collecting different gadgets for creating specific dishes – and has the space to accommodate them.

To buy: Dhs580 at Tavola.





KitchenAid Artisan 4l Food Processor

When it comes to food processors, it doesn't get any better than this! With countless features including a three-piece food pusher, an external adjustable slicing disc, dicing kit, discs to shave, cut and shred, a citrus press, a dough blade, and an egg whip – this versatile and durable appliance is an absolute must-have.

What we liked: If you are someone that loves to play host and cook for friends and family, this appliance is a great addition to your kitchen. The processor is perfect for cooking in large batches – significantly speeding up prep time. More importantly, the gadget is multi-purpose, allowing you to slice, dice, grate and blend! Its 'all-in-one' approach is guaranteed to leave you impressed. We found that it was incredibly efficient for slicing vegetables for dishes.

What we didn't like: There's isn't much to fault with this appliance but we will say that it is very bulky and takes up a lot of space on the kitchen counter. It is definitely not recommended for those with small kitchens and limited storage space. The processor comes with a lot of different parts which makes the washing and cleaning process slightly tedious as well.

To buy: Dhs2,745 at Al Ghandi Electronics.

What products would you like to see reviewed in the magazine? ✉Tell us on feedback@bbcgoodfoodme.com or facebook.com/bbcgoodfoodme.

Reviews by LAUREN WING, NICOLA MONTEATH, RUSHIKA BHATIA, SUDESHNA GHOSH.

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Tried & tasted

Each month, we review two of the city's top tables.

Modern Arabic



#Arabic #seafood #traditionalwithatwist

Where: Qbara, Wafi

What's it like: Dubai foodies have long complained about not having a good, high-end Arabic restaurant to go to here. Qbara singlehandedly changed all that since it opened to rave reviews late last year. As you walk in from the valet parking, the sensor-fitted doors slide, open-sesame style, to let you into the cavernous space, and it is impossible not to be impressed. While big, the interior is cleverly designed to be intimate at the same time, with separate sections seamlessly flowing into each other, and a massive bar anchoring it all together which the upstairs lounge overlooks. Intricate wood carvings, a mosaic of suspended mini carpets doubling up as wall décor, filigreed teardrop-shaped light fixtures, mood lighting, and their own mix of Arabesque lounge music all come together to create an atmosphere of understated stylishness. Refreshingly, the staff are excellently trained and knowledgeable, and are happy to recommend from the menu. Start off with one of their delicious topically named cocktails – qbara20 for instance, to celebrate Expo 2020 – then opt for a selection of their mezze-style small dishes. The food is Pan-Arabian, drawing from across the region, from Morocco to the Emirates, reimagining familiar flavours (think sumac and tahini) in a contemporary way. And the execution of each dish is flawless. Whether it's the fried calamari – crispy outside, perfectly succulent inside – or the sumac dusted grilled prawns with a chunky chermoula sauce on the side. The mains, known as qbara dishes, all sounded tempting, but our picks, of the slow-cooked pigeon with the ancient grain freekeh and dates, and the marinated poussin with sumac onion and dried yoghurt, were both delicious. Arabic desserts tend to be quite overpowering, but not here. The saffron yoghurt that we decided to share – topped with a playful candyfloss hat – it totally hit the spot, not too sweet, but the quintessential flavours intact. With the atmosphere, food, and service just so, Qbara just begs the question – what are they doing right that so many others, sadly, get wrong here in Dubai?

Best for: A glam evening out

If you want to go: Around Dhs600 for two, without drinks. Ramadan menu is Dhs450 per head, call 04-7092500.

- Sudeshna Ghosh



#purplefilter #salmon #tastyveggies

Where: Nāy Restaurant and Lounge, Emirates Financial Tower, DIFC

What's it like: This new Lebanese eatery is a hidden gem tucked away in the Emirates Financial Towers building in DIFC. When I visited the glamorous, yet relaxed, restaurant on a weekday evening, it was quite crowded even though it was just 7:30pm – clearly the place had something special to offer! Nay is a refined version of a regular Arabic restaurant, and also offers shisha and live entertainment.

As soon as you enter the restaurant, you will feel as though you are in an Arabian-style lounge, thanks to the purple lighting scheme, crystal lanterns hanging from the ceiling, and maroon drapes with pistachio green curtains. Take a seat at one of the couches or dining tables and dive straight into the menu, that has a contemporary twist, while tucking into the warm Arabic bread with an olive dip. For mezze, my top recommendations are Nay Labneh (generous dollops of labneh on a bed of chilli oil with confit sundried tomatoes and fresh thyme on top), Basterma cheese rolls (crispy on the outside but warm and gooey on the inside with sliced basterma pieces) – our favourite – and grilled chicken wings marinated in lemon juice, garlic and olive oil. The grilled wings were a refreshing take to the usual fried wings most Arabic restaurants serve. For mains, my dining partner chose the mixed grills platter of kebab, lamb cubes, shish taouk – all done perfectly – accompanied by grilled peppers and onions that added a hint of sweetness to the dish and a divine kofta arrayes (Arabic flatbread stuffed with meat and spices). I chose the grilled salmon pave, a moist, flavoured salmon steak on a bed of sautéed, slightly crunchy artichokes and saffron rice. The salmon was doused in a beautiful lemon butter sauce that made every morsel juicy. To finish, we devoured the Kashta ice cream for dessert, a traditional sticky, stretchy ice cream with crushed cinnamon biscuits and sweet raspberry jam.

Best for: A relaxed meal with friends

If you want to go: Around Dhs300 for dinner for two, without drinks. Call 04-3516660.

- Nicola Monteath





Photographs SUPPLIED and by REVIEWERS

Dusit Thani
DUBAI



(Ramadan Lantern) Photo by GHADA ELATTAR

Make a child smile this Ramadan.

Celebrate the breaking of the daily fast more meaningfully as Dusit Thani Dubai donates a percentage to Operation Smile for every diner availing of our Iftar offerings.

Iftar Buffet Dinner at the 24th Floor

Traditional Arabic dishes and juices amidst an array of international delights take centerstage from participating specialty restaurants – Benjarong, PAX and The Californian – providing guests with a picturesque view of Dubai's cityscape. Priced at AED 145 per person.

Create Your Own Group Iftar Menu

For private gatherings, you can create your own Group Iftar Menu, too. Choose from a variety of carefully prepared dishes to suit your guests' discerning tastes and leave the rest up to us. Group Iftar Menu starts from AED 110 per person for groups of 50 or above.

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The Doha diaries

Our Doha-based columnist has her finger on the pulse of the city's foodie scene.

Ramadan in Doha

Ramadan is my favorite time in Doha. People are less rushed, there is a real atmosphere of sharing and of course, there is less traffic and a LOT of amazing food. Qatar, unlike the rest of the Gulf countries, is more geared towards Suhoor, the late night 'dinner', rather than Iftar which is traditionally shared with family. It's a relaxed event – some food, some shisha, some conversation. Each year hotels and restaurants vie for the most elaborate tents. Here are my picks for 2014:

Grand Hyatt Doha

This luxe hotel is reprising its popular Ramandanak concept, which turns the hotel's lower lobby into a 'tent'. All the hotel's outlets are combining to offer an international buffet and they also have arguably the best shisha in town – ask for the fresh fruit type. Price for Sohoor or Iftar at Ramadanak tent is QR250 per person. *Call +97444481234.*

Yum Yum at K108

This foodie's paradise is now very much a part of Doha's dining scene. With a view across the Corniche and some of the best French-inspired food in Doha, the restaurant will be open until 2am during Ramadan. The cheese rolls and half of a roasted chicken are not to be missed. *Contact +97444333000.*

St Regis Doha

This exquisite hotel will have their usual sumptuous spread accompanied by world-class live entertainment during Suhoor from Laialy El Nagham, resident band of the Cairo Opera House. Their popular casual dining restaurant Opal by Gordon Ramsay will also open daily (breakfast, lunch and dinner) for those with hummous fatigue! *Call +9744446000.*

W Doha

Still the funkiest place in town, W is bringing back their Sultan's Tent, featuring live cooking stations (the dumpling station was given a heavy workout by me last year!) as well as entertainment. Wahm will also be converted in a Ramadan venue, with Suhoor being offered each night. *Call +97444535000.*

Al Jomrok Boutique Hotel, Souq Waqif

In the heart of the Souq, you can combine two great loves – food and football. Each night they will be showing World Cup matches as well as offering a menu of Arabic specialties. *Call +97444336666.*

Sharq Village and Spa

Those not wanting the full buffet catastrophe can head to the Shisha Diwan at this charming hotel. Available every evening from 7pm, they will also have a variety of exotic teas on offer. *Call +97444256666.*

Four Seasons Doha

The Garden Terrace at this Doha institution has been taken over for the Holy Month and a huge screen erected to watch World Cup matches as well as Arabic entertainment and an international buffet. *Contact +97-44948888.*

- Rachel Morris is a Qatar-based writer and food blogger (lifeonthewedge.net).

The latest food news and happenings in the city.

World cup mania

Cheer on your favourite football team at the Al Nafourah tent, Oryx Rotana-Doha, and feast on a selection of dishes such as oriental sausages. Shisha is available at well.
QR150 minimum charge, call +97444023333.

Bubbly on tap!

Doha residents will now be able to enjoy bubble tea, as Bubbles and Boba will be opening up three stores in Qatar this year. Get ready to quench your thirst with hot or cold varieties made with freshly brewed black or green tea, infused with mango and lychee.
Visit bubblesandboba.com.



Eid treat

If you aren't hosting an Eid lunch at home, or visiting someone, gather the family and head to Al Areen Ballroon, West End - Renaissance Doha City Center Hotel, to enjoy the buffet spread. Feast on ouzi from live cooking stations.
QR235 per person, call +97444196100.



Celebration menu

Celebrate Eid at Aroma, Kempinski Residences & Suites, Doha, with a four-course lunch menu which features a sharing platter of Arabic hot and cold mezze, kingfish sayadieh with basmati rice, chicken with pickled lemon and vegetable couscous and lamb shanks, as well as dessert.
QR195 per person, call +97444053325.

Additional text NICOLA MONTEATH | Photos SUPPLIED

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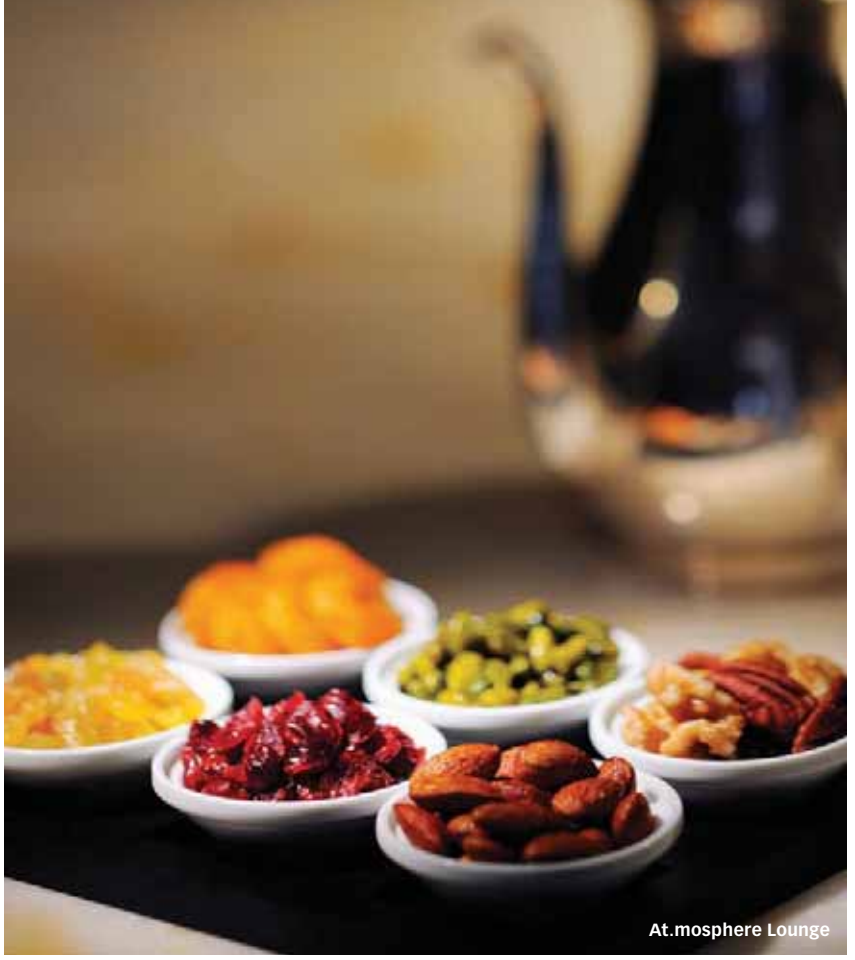
the noodle house

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At.mosphere Lounge

Flavours of the month

Our pick of the best Iftars, Suhoors and Eid offers this month.

✳ Al Falak ballroom, Burj Al Arab

We Love!

If you're planning a special Iftar gathering, look no further than this iconic location which is hosting its spectacular annual Iftar in its glittering ballroom this year. The elegant, Arabesque environment offers the perfect setting for the lavish buffet, which includes traditional juices, fresh dips, and Pan-Arabian dishes like Emirati Prawns majbous, Lebanese-style Samak harra (fish), Iranian Chicken fasnjoun, and Syrian delicacy Bamieh bel laham (Veal with okra), plus Arabic baby lamb ouzi with saffron rice, and even a Shawarma station. Arabic sweets and international desserts, followed by tea served with a flourish by a traditionally-costumed man completes the authentic mix.
Dhs400 per person, call 04-3017600.

✳ At.mosphere Lounge, Burj Khalifa

Indulge in afternoon tea, given an Arabian twist for Ramadan, and savour cumin scented egg and coriander sandwiches, za'atar quiche, orange blossom éclairs and honey-drizzled baklava, plus other Iftar treats.
Daily for Iftar, Dhs340 per person. Call 04-8883828.

✳ Talay, Le Meridien Abu Dhabi

This laid-back restaurant is the place to visit for a casual Iftar dining experience at a great value price! The buffet spread features a selection of Arabic dishes including moutabel, kabsa, grills, ouzi as well as a selection of rice items. Desserts such as knafeh and katayef are a must-try!
Dhs99 per person, call 02-6446666.





✳ Leila Restaurants

If you're looking for a traditional Iftar or Suhoor to head to with friends and family, an outlet of this casual, family-friendly restaurant chain is perfect. A selection of Lebanese dishes as well as desserts are available for Iftar. For Suhoor, try the za'atar and cheese saj as well as a selection of breakfast-style options, accompanied by fresh mint lemonade.
Located in Mirdiff City Centre, Downtown Dubai and Al Reem island Abu Dhabi. Dhs140 per person, call 04-4483384

✳ Bastakiya Café and Restaurant, Arabian Courtyard Hotel and Spa

This cultural district is the place to visit with family during the Holy Month, and offers Indian, Pakistani and Arabic dishes in a traditional setting with live cooking stations. Highlights include fatayer and tempered chana (chickpeas).
Dhs85 per person, call 04-3519111.

✳ Moroccan Restaurant and Lounge, Four Points by Sheraton

Tantalise your tastebuds with authentic Moroccan cuisine served at the widespread buffet. Lamb and chicken tajine, couscous, and seafood bastilla, are some of the traditional dishes created specifically for the Holy Month.
Dhs175 per person, call 04-3169726. >>



Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED



✴ Zest, One and Only The Palm

Take your family to the traditional Iftar buffet at the resort's main restaurant, and try an extensive selection of Arabic and continental dishes including lamb ouzi and mixed grills, while enjoying performances from the oud player. End with decadent desserts and tea or coffee.
Dhs220 per person, call 04-4401030.



✴ Al Bahou, Movenpick Hotel Ibn Batuta Gate Dubai

Dine under 88 enchanting Arabic lanterns in the lobby of this hotel, and enjoy a sumptuous selection of hot and cold mezze, alongside mouthwatering Turkish, Malaysian, Indian, and Arabic dishes. The tunes from the oud player create a lovely vibe as you dine. End the meal with a visit to the air-conditioned terrace of Moroc Bar and Lounge for shisha and beverages.
Dhs165 per person, call 04-4445613.

✴ Lalezar, Jumeirah Zabeel Saray



Enjoy an Anatolian style Iftar of Turkish delicacies served to the table, such as ezme (a starter of spiced tomatoes with herbs), manti (traditional pasta garlic yoghurt with mint butter), and juicy Turkish sausages. Baklawa, pumpkin pudding with saffron sauce, and ice cream make up the dessert offerings.
Dhs195 per person, call 04-4530444.

✴ Atayeb at Origins, Yas Viceroy Abu Dhabi

Head out for Suhoor and enjoy shisha and a selection of traditional Arabic mezze and Ramadan juices at the fully air-conditioned tent on the terrace of Origins.
À la carte menu prices and Dhs130 cover charge for entrance. Call 02-6560600.



✴ The Farm, Al Barari

Escape the city chaos and visit this tranquil restaurant surrounded by lush landscaping for a green Iftar. The Ramadan additions to the menu includes healthy dishes made from fresh, high-quality produce, such as grilled tiger prawns with mango for starters, chicken apricot tagine or dukka crust fish fillet for mains, and chocolate Umm Ali with nuts and cinnamon for dessert, among other options.
À la carte menu, call 04-3925660.

✴ Asateer Tent, Atlantis, The Palm



Treat your family to the lavish Iftar spread at this magical tent with Arabian-style decor. Sit indoors or out at the air-conditioned tent, before tucking into the buffet of Middle Eastern delights, complete with live cooking stations for lamb ouzi – displayed in a large brass pot – and kunafeh.
Dhs195 per person, call 04-4262000.

✴ Lafayette Gourmet, Galleries Lafayette

This food-hall style space offers a selection of dishes to suit all palates. Choose from a wide array of salads, Arabic grills and ouzi, Moroccan tagines and Spanish treats – all in one setting. Lafayette Gourmet also offers home catering services.
Dhs155 per person, call 04-3399933.

✴ Angelina, Dubai Mall

Try an Iftar with a French twist – the Ramadan menu showcases salad mograbieh (with tarragon leaves in walnut vinaigrette, beetroot carpaccio, candied walnuts, sakura leaves and anise blossoms), and saffron marinated lamb chops with heirloom carrot and orange salad, quinoa and sumac labneh, among other delicacies.
Menu prices start from Dhs55, call 04-4428814.

✴ Thai Kitchen Terrace, Park Hyatt Dubai

Gather a few friends and head to this gorgeous waterfront location for Suhoor. The menu features hot and cold mezze, as well as a selection of Arabic and Asian mains, desserts and traditional Ramadan drinks to quench your thirst. Enjoy shisha at the outdoor air-conditioned tent in the restaurant's garden.
From 8pm-2am, à la carte menu prices.
Call 04-3172222.

EID DINING

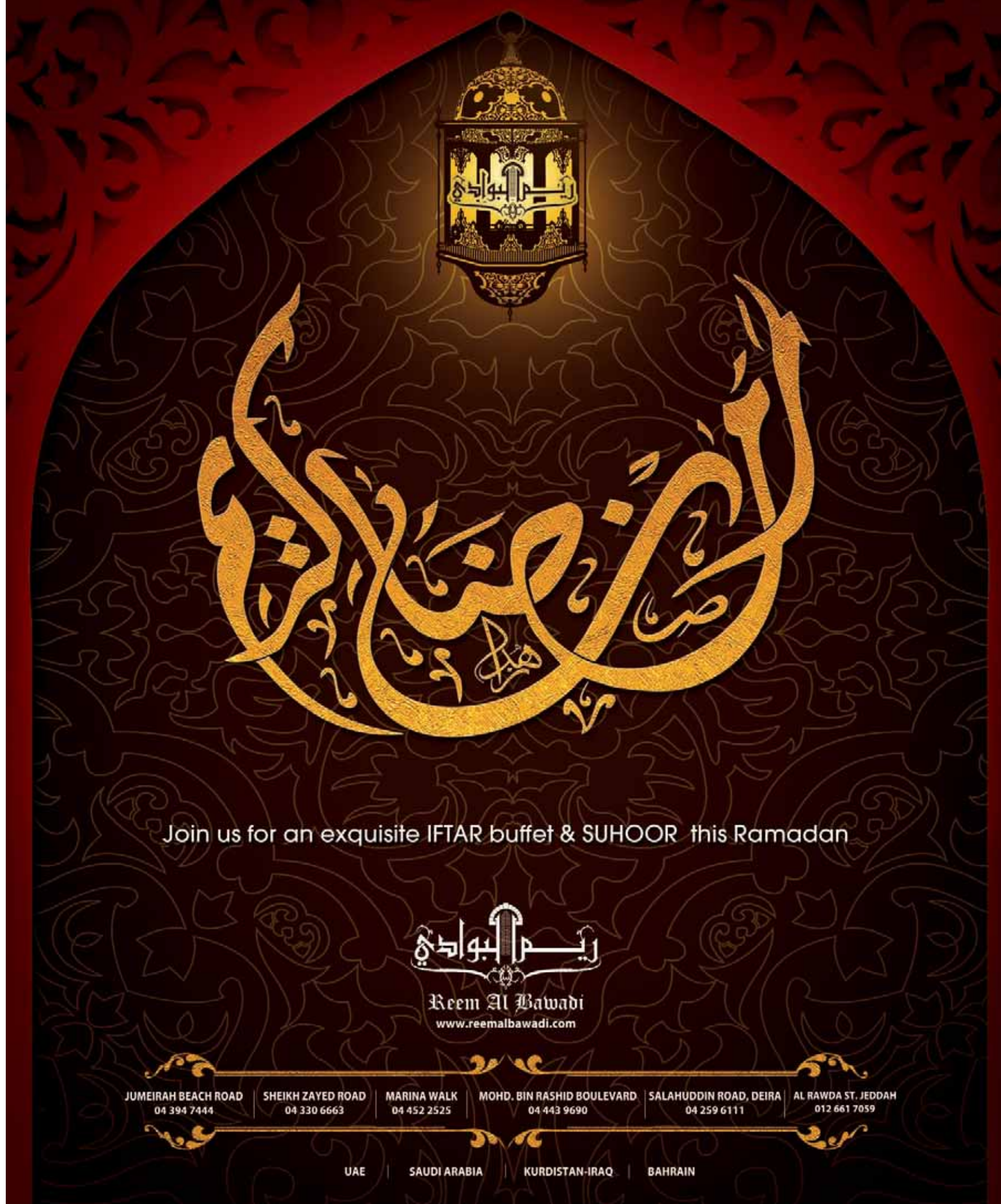
✴ Na3Na3, The Address Dubai Mall

Follow up an Eid shopping spree with lunch at this Arabic restaurant. Indulge in Arabic mixed grills, shawarmas, freshly baked bread, contemporary seafood delights, and a mouthwatering selection of desserts, while the oud player strums away in the background.
Dhs250 per person, call 04-4388041.

✴ Azalya, Melia Dubai

Celebrate Eid with the Grand Eid Brunch which comprises of a selection of Indian dishes and snacks (at the chaat corner) from Signature by Sanjeev Kapoor, as well as lamb biryani, beef ouzi, and tagine from the live cooking stations.
Dhs199 per person, call 04-3868111.




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An Emirati-inspired Iftar menu

Impress friends and family by serving these easy-to-make Emirati dishes this Ramadan. Maitha Al Shamsi, co-owner of Mama Tani café, shares some of her favourite recipes. Photographs ANAS CHERUR



Maitha Al Shamsi, co-owner and recipe developer of Mama Tani café (which translates to second mama in Arabic) always reminisced about the lovely aromas and dishes cooked by her grandmother – Mama Tani – when she was living in the UK for her studies. Maitha came back soon after to open the home-style restaurant with her sibling, Omar Shamsi, which serves traditional Emirati recipes with a modern twist.

Falooda (Vermicelli drink)

SERVES 6-8 ● PREP 10 MINS
COOK 5-8 MINS Easy

2 tsp basil seeds or chia seeds
120ml water
120g vermicelli
470ml chilled milk
120ml rose syrup
60g sugar
125ml ice
Ground pistachios, for garnish

1 Soak the basil or chia seeds in the water for 10mins and then drain.
2 In a pan of boiling water add the vermicelli and cook until done. Add the milk, rose syrup, sugar and ice in a blender and mix well.
3 In a glass, add the cooked vermicelli and seeds, followed by the milk mixture. Sprinkle pistachios on top and serve.

Text and styling by NICOLA MONTEATH | Props from CRATE & BARREL; MARINA HOME

Patees (Beef patties)

SERVES 6-8 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 40 MINS

1 tbsp cooking oil
1 onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic
1kg ground beef
½ tsp cumin
½ tsp cinnamon
120g green peas
4 potatoes,
2 tbsp butter
Salt and pepper, for seasoning
3 eggs, beaten
470g breadcrumbs

1 In a pan, add the oil and fry the onions and garlic until translucent and soft. Add the beef and cook until the meat is no longer pink. Add the cumin, cinnamon and peas. Season well and leave aside.
2 Boil the potatoes in salted water until soft. Remove from the water, peel and add the butter. Mash until there are no lumps and form small round potato balls, Make a big thumbprint in the middle and spoon the meat mixture into it. Cover the meat mixture with the potato and flatten (like a burger patty). Dip in the egg and cover with breadcrumbs. Deep fry until it becomes a deep golden colour, drain excess oil on a kitchen towel and serve warm. »





Harees (Meat porridge)

SERVES 6-8 ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 3 HRS Easy

475g harees (wheatberries)
1kg lamb
1 tsp black pepper powder
2-3 tsp salt
2-3 cinnamon sticks
Water, for soaking the wheat
Samen (local clarified butter) or melted butter or ghee

1 Soak the wheat overnight in plenty of water and then drain. In a large, heavy bottomed pot (or special harees pot), place the wheat with the lamb, salt, pepper and cinnamon sticks. Add enough hot water so that it is about 5cm above the wheat and meat mixture. Place a damp cloth or aluminium foil over the pot and cover with a tight lid. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat and cook on a very low heat for 2-3 hrs, stirring occasionally to skim off the froth or fat from the surface. Once the wheat is soft and most of the water has been absorbed, remove from heat and allow to cool (If all the water has been absorbed add about 1 cup of boiling water; if there is too much water but the wheat is cooked, ladle out the excess water).
2 Remove the bones off the lamb and shred any large pieces of meat. Mix the wheat and tender meat until it reaches a slightly elastic, paste-like consistency using a blender, adding a little salted boiling water to thin it down if required (a large wooden spoon is traditionally used for this). Check the seasoning and add more if desired. Transfer to a serving dish or tray.
3 Place the samen in a pan and gently warm until it melts. Pour the melted butter over the harees and serve hot.



Farni (Rice pudding)

SERVES 6-8 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS Easy

1 tbsp ground cardamom (placed in a tea bag or small pouch)
1l milk
235g sugar
175g rice flour
60ml rose water
Ground pistachios, for garnish
Saffron threads, for garnish

1 Soak the ground cardamom in a cup of hot water.
2 In a medium saucepan, on low heat, add the milk, sugar and rice flour. Whisk constantly and make sure it doesn't stick to the edges. When the mixture thickens, add the cardamom infused water and the rose water. Keep whisking until the mixture appears glossy, Pour into serving bowls and set aside for 1 hr. Garnish with pistachio and saffron and refrigerate for 1-2 hrs before serving. GF



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Modern mezze

Give your Ramadan gathering a contemporary twist with this mezze spread from Than Htike Aung, Chef de Cuisine of La Mer, Sofitel Abu Dhabi Corniche.

Photographs ANAS CHERUR



Text and Styling by NICOLA MONTEATH | Props from CRATE & BARREL



Chef Than Htike Aung may have studied physics in his hometown Yangon, Myanmar, but soon after, got a food and beverage production certification to pursue his passion. He has worked in Dubai and Doha, and joined La Mer, Sofitel Abu Dhabi Corniche, to take on the Chef de cuisine position in 2013. He is known for his artistic presentations in dishes.

Saffron hummous with date-labneh ball and fried ricotta

SERVES 4 ● PREP 35 MINS ● COOK 5 MINS Easy

4 garlic cloves
200g chickpeas, soaked overnight, boiled and drained with liquid reserved
1½ tsp kosher salt
15g tahini
6 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
2g saffron
Edible flowers, for garnish
FOR THE DATE AND LABNEH BALL
50g date paste
200g labneh
40g za'atar
FOR THE FRIED RICOTTA BALL
100g ricotta cheese
100g chickpea flour
400ml vegetable oil
Salt and pepper, to taste

1 Mince the garlic and then add the rest of the ingredients, along with 2 tbsp of the reserved chickpea water to blend into a thick hummous. Season and refrigerate.
2 Mix the date and labneh ingredients together and fold in the za'atar. Set aside.
3 Fold the ricotta cheese with the chickpea flour, followed by the date and labneh mix. Shape to a form a small ball and deep fry in the vegetable oil until golden brown. Set aside on a kitchen towel to remove excess oil and season.
4 Place the saffron hummous on a plate and serve the ricotta cheese ball on top. Garnish with the flowers and serve with Arabic bread. >>

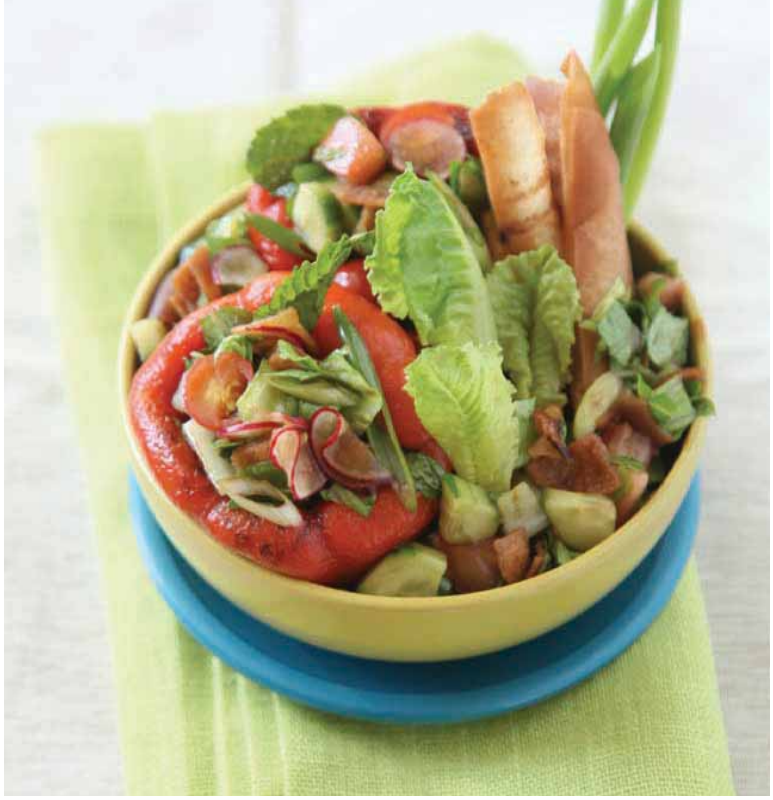


Seafood kibbeh

SERVES 4 ● PREP 40 MINS ● COOK 5-10 MINS Easy

100g bulghur (burghul wheat)
500g seabass or (any white fish)
120g onions
10g coriander leaves, finely chopped
10g parsley, finely chopped
Salt and pepper, to taste
FOR THE SEAFOOD FILLING
10ml olive oil
30g shallots
50g calamari, diced
50g shrimps, diced
10g pine nuts, toasted
FOR THE DIP
30g labneh
20g cream cheese
10g dill, finely chopped
10g shallot, finely chopped
5g cilantro, finely chopped
Salt, for seasoning

1 Place the bulghur in a fine sieve and rinse under cold running water. Press out moisture and keep aside.
2 Remove skin and bones from the fish. Chop roughly. Combine the fish and onions with the bulghur and other ingredients. Mix to combine in a food processor to make the kibbeh dough.
3 Heat oil in a medium size pan and sauté the shallots and seafood for the filling for 4 mins. Season, remove from the heat and add the toasted pine nuts, mix well.
4 To make the kibbeh, make small balls of the bulghur mixture and flatten so that it is about a 6-7 cm disc. Fill with the seafood filling on one side and fold back on top to seal. Make sharp triangular ends on both sides. Deep fry in hot oil for 4 mins until crispy.
5 To make the dip, mix all the ingredients together and chill.
6 Serve the kibbeh with the dip on the side.



Fattoush salad

SERVES 4 ● PREP 25 MINS
● NO COOK Easy

2 pita breads, sliced into small pieces and fried in vegetable oil
6g sumac powder
Salt
80g romaine lettuce, sliced
30g cucumbers, peeled and diced
10g cherry tomatoes, peeled and halved
5g red radish, finely sliced
10g red capsicums, roasted, peeled and diced
3g mint leaves
10g pomegranate seeds
3g spring onions, sliced
FOR THE DRESSING
30ml lemon juice
80ml argan oil
10ml passion fruit syrup
6g sumac powder
5g fresh za'atar leaves, chopped
10g manuka honey
Salt and pepper, for seasoning

1 Season the pita bread with sumac and salt.
2 Mix all the salad ingredients together (except pita bread and spring onions).
3 Blend all the dressing ingredients together, and pour over the salad. Toss and garnish with spring onions and pita bread, and serve.



Baked seabass with harra sauce

SERVES 4 ● PREP 30 MINS
● COOK 25 MINS Easy

10g large garlic, peeled
1 ½ tsp salt
15g fresh red or green long chilli peppers, seeded
30g small onions, cut into pieces
2 large tomatoes, peeled and de-seeded
1 tbsp Thai red curry paste
4g sweet basil leaves, finely chopped
1 tsp freshly ground cumin seeds
3 tbsp tomato paste
4g fresh green pepper corn
1 whole sea bass (about 1 kg), cleaned but left whole with head and tail on
40ml extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
½ red capsicum, chopped
½ green capsicum, chopped
1 spring onion, chopped
30g fresh cilantro, chopped
FOR THE SAFFRON QUINOA
A handful of sunflower seeds
50g quinoa
3g saffron

1 In a mortar and pestle, pound the garlic and salt together until mushy. Put the chilli peppers and onions in a food processor and chop finely. Add 1 large tomato, the Thai red curry paste and sweet basil to process. Remove and stir in the crushed garlic, tomato paste, fresh green pepper corn and cumin, to make the chilli pepper sauce.
2 Preheat the oven to 180C. Rinse the fish and pat dry with paper towels. Score the fish in three places on each side and cut the centre in half (not all the way through). Lay it on a baking tray and coat with olive oil on both sides. Season and cover with the chili pepper sauce. Bake the fish for 1 hr, basting with the olive oil in the baking pan. Remove and fill with the chopped tomato, capsicums, spring onions and cilantro.
3 Toast the sunflower seeds in a medium large pan for 3-5 mins and set aside.
4 Soak the quinoa in cold water for 4 hrs and boil with the saffron for 15 mins. Strain the water and mix with the toasted sunflower seeds. Season and serve with the fish in the middle of the table – and let everyone spoon out small portions for themselves. GF

Ramadan Kareem

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Iftar at The Cavendish for AED 159 per person

* The above rate is inclusive of taxes and service charge
* Validity: During Ramadan 2014

Arabic Food Buffet



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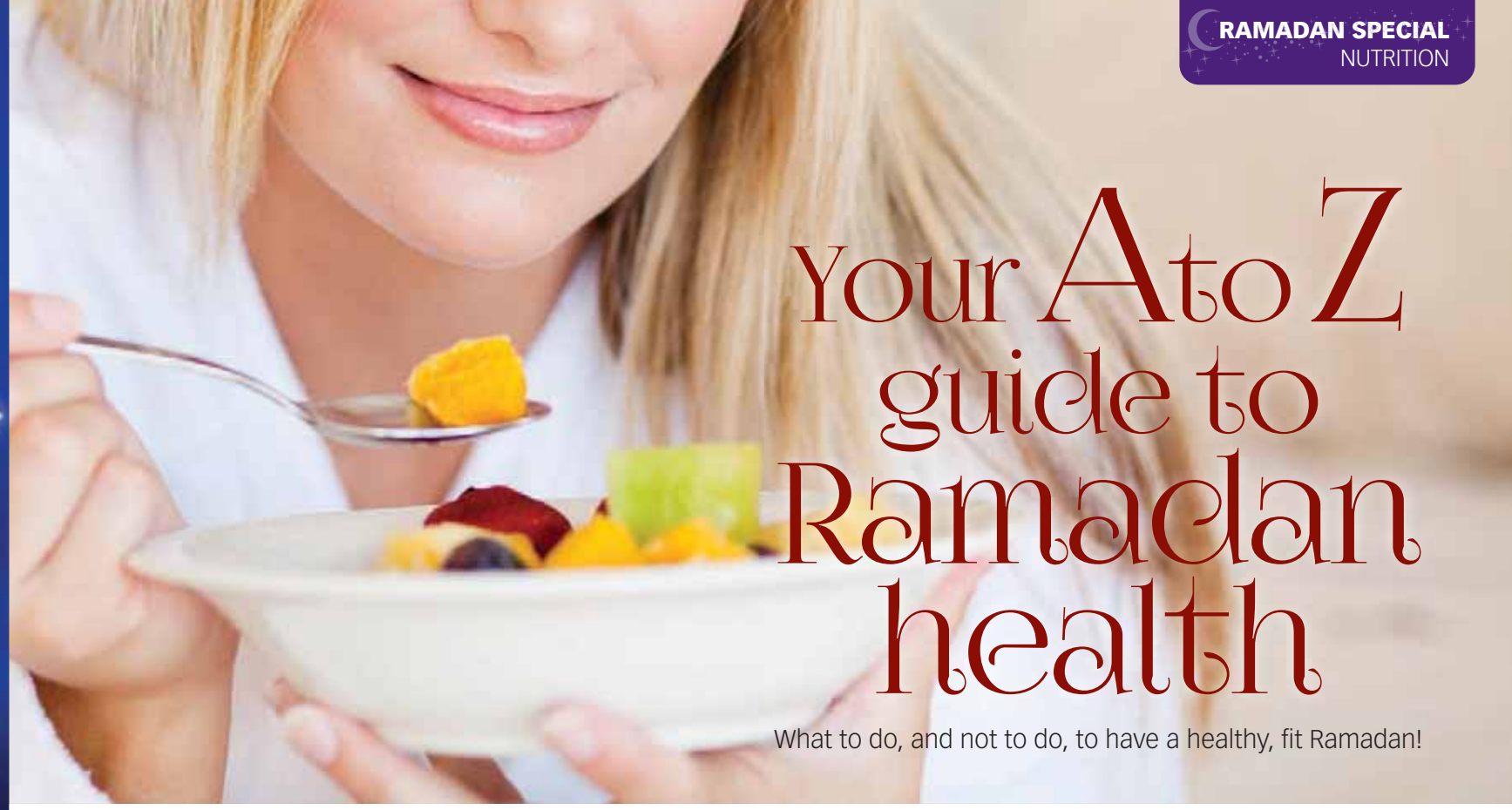


Shisha



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Your A to Z guide to Ramadan health

What to do, and not to do, to have a healthy, fit Ramadan!

Arabic cuisine - and a great variety of it - is a highlight of Ramadan dining at Iftars around the city. Many of the traditional dishes can be heavy, so limit your portion sizes, and go for the healthier options such as nutrient-packed hummous, fattoush salad, and grills.

Break bad eating habits after a long day of fasting. You might be tempted to eat anything in sight, even a packet of crisps, but it's best to break your fast with dates and water, or a freshly squeezed fruit juice, followed by soup – there's nothing worse for your system than ending a fasting period with a big, heavy meal. The month of Ramadan is a great starting point for those looking to steer their diet into a healthier direction.

Caffeine withdrawal might be hard, but limiting your intake of coffee or energy drinks to one a day will be beneficial, as caffeine is a diuretic and can lead to excessive urination and dehydration if consumed in large amounts.

Dates are a vitamin-rich fruit traditionally eaten to break a fast, and help regulate low sugar (hypoglycemia) while increasing energy levels. The low-calorie fruit also has soluble and insoluble fibers, which promote healthy bowel movements and help prevent constipation.

Eat less refined sugars. Try to make desserts with fruits and use honey or agave nectar as a substitute for sugar in desserts. "Foods containing too much sugar increase gastric acidity, and will give you a burning sensation in the stomach and indigestion," says Lovely Ranganath, Senior Nutritionist at Healthtrendz, Dubai World Trade Centre.

Fried foods and fizzy drinks should be omitted from Ramadan spreads. Most of these foods are loaded with fats that the liver can't process, and as a result is stored away as fatty tissue – it also makes it tough for some to wake up at Suhoor time, as their digestion interferes with our sleep cycle, since the body puts more effort into breaking down the fats. Try baked sambosa, kibbeh and fatayer, or use an air fryer if you still want crispy, but light, fried food. Don't drink too many fizzy drinks as they are high in sugar and cause flatulence as well.

Getting active is important, so continue to do some sort of activity during Ramadan as well – or if you don't have an existing routine, start! "Reduce the intensity of your workouts to be able to exercise consistently without causing exhaustion or dehydration. Make sure to increase the intervals in between exercises too," says personal trainer and Adidas brand ambassador, Bernadette Abraham (BernaciseMe.com).

Hydration is vital for optimum health, as it helps the body function. "A great tip is to drink a litre of lemon water apart from the 1-2 litres of regular water, as it has a positive impact on your liver, provides you with sufficient vitamin C and hydrates your muscles while making you feel less lethargic after a meal," says Lovely. Less water consumption will lead to headaches and mood swings during the daytime when fasting, so drink enough before sleeping and after the Suhoor meal.

Iftar gatherings are a must-try experience for everyone during Ramadan and hosting one at home is a special experience. "Ramadan gatherings are all about bonding, connecting and sharing," says Etiquette specialist and Image Consultant, Balsam Al Khalil (Etiquettewithbalsam.com). Make sure you serve a healthy balanced meal during Iftar – include plenty of juices, dates, and grilled and baked dishes rather than fried. Steer away from too much of red meat, when it's so hot outside, and serve more fish instead. >>



Juices such as qamar al deen (apricot juice) and jallab (made with grape molasses and rose water) are popular options for Iftar and Suhoor. Balsam suggests having these traditional Arabic drinks ready for Iftar so that guests can help themselves to it immediately after they break their fast. Fresh orange, pineapple and watermelon juices are also healthy options to serve.

Kitchen help might be required if you are hosting a gathering at home. If you are pressed for time, hire help, or get the children to pitch in when cooking, to speed up the process – it's a great way to spend quality time with them as well.

Load up on vitamin supplements during the month of Ramadan – especially if you aren't eating a wide variety of wholesome, nutrient-rich food. "Take a basic multivitamin and mineral to help your body better cope with fasting. It is absolutely essential that you choose your brand wisely, as absorption of nutrients and vitamins is a major concern and differs with every individual. For you to feel any of the benefits, you should go with a raw, food based supplement," says wellbeing expert and co-founder of beutifulyou.co.uk, Laura Holland.

Metabolism levels can drop during the Holy Month, especially during the day. However, this can be avoided if you drink plenty of water after sunset, and control portion sizes during Iftar and Suhoor. "Eat slowly and mindfully, and chew food properly," advises Laura.

Nasty ingredients can be found in a variety of foods. For instance, sand (seen as silicon dioxide on labels) is used as an anti-clumping agent in some salts and soups, while saltwater can be found in meat and chicken to enhance the flavour – look for labels which state 'flavoured with up to a 10 per cent solution'. Read the labels carefully and avoid buying processed foods with unknown ingredients or too many E numbers. Stick to organic ingredients where possible, and make things like soup from scratch (it's so easy!) rather than buying packaged varieties.

Opt for soup and salad to begin your meal with. A lentil soup or bowl full of vegetables will not only sate hunger pangs, but will also keep you from indulging in excessive amounts of food during the main course. Plus, a bowl of mixed salad is a great way to get your five-a-day.

Plan meals ahead. This way you're not running around to feed hungry mouths at the last minute, and are relaxed enough to enjoy your meals, prayers and Iftar gatherings as well. When entertaining people, Balsam also recommends taking into account your guests' cultural background and preferences.

Quit smoking – if this was one of your New Year resolutions, and you still haven't gotten around to completely kicking the cigarette habit as yet, now is the time to do so. Nicotine stresses the body and causes dehydration which can lead to serious health issues, particularly when fasting.

Remember to pace your meals well. You may want to eat as much as you can, as soon as the sun sets, but it's important to leave at least 20 minutes gap in between courses, to avoid indigestion. Begin with dates and water and then have a bowl of lentil soup or salad. Eat small portions of dishes for mains, and then wait for the food to digest a bit before tucking into desserts.

Suhoor takes place in the early morning, and it may be hard for some people to wake up in the A.M. Don't sleep through it – as this is when you prep your body for the fasting hours. A glass of fresh orange juice, and low GI foods such as oatmeal, wholegrain toast, and fruits like grapefruit and peaches are great options, as they keep you full for longer and sustain energy levels.

Take time for tea after a meal. Swap your regular cups of black tea for herbal tea, as it is not only beneficial for health, but also keeps you hydrated. Try peppermint tea to help aid digestion, and green tea to up your antioxidant intake.

Utilise all your pantry ingredients before re-stocking. Make sure you use everything you have – to avoid food wastage – before making the next grocery store trip.

Variety in dishes is key, so unleash the culinary goddess in yourself, and try a range of cuisines and dishes. Ramadan is a great time to experiment with different cuisines – trying the traditional Iftar dishes of different cultures will help break the monotony.

Walking after Iftar can do wonders for your health. "Resist the temptation of sitting down after your meal and get into the habit of taking a stroll instead. If it's too humid outside, head to a mall or walk on a treadmill if you have one," says Bernadette. She also recommends getting a pedometer to track the number of steps you take per day (the general recommendation is 10,000 steps per day).

Xanthones are natural compounds which are more potent than Vitamin C and E and packed with antioxidants. They can be found in fruits such as mangosteen. Add this tropical summer fruit to your fruit platter, to ensure nutrition levels are maintained during Ramadan.

Your body clock changes during Ramadan, and this can affect the body's functioning if not managed well. Get a good night's sleep every day, and eat a balanced meal comprising of complex carbohydrates, protein and fibre-rich food and fruit and vegetables. Avoid processed foods as they are hard to digest.

Zakat is a donation made to the less fortunate – a duty which every Muslim needs to fulfil on a yearly basis. Whether you follow Islam or not, you could still follow the act and donate food parcels through various campaigns around the city and drives such as adoptacamp.ae. GF

Ramadan Kareem

Spend more quality time with your family and friends this holy month of Ramadan at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City. During this month of blessing, Chef's House welcomes you with a delicious array of classical Arabian and Oriental dishes. The buffet also features several live cooking stations and daily flavoured Ouzi at sundown for only **AED 119** pp buffet only or **AED 139** pp including fresh juices, coffee and tea.

Private or group Iftar bookings and corporate packages are available on request.

Above prices are inclusive of 10% Service Charge and 10% Municipality Fees
* There is no discount given on the above prices throughout Ramadan



Chef's House

Chef's House, Ground Floor – East Tower, Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City,
04-3669111, email: chefshouse.mediacity.dubai@radissonblu.com

A gift for Eid!

Share the love and happiness of this special occassion with these Arabesque present ideas.



L'OBJET 2 TIER PLATTER BAMBOO BASE CAKE TRAY, Dhs2,540 at Bloomingdale's Home - Dubai



RAMADAN CHOCOLATE HAMPER, Dhs250 at Candelite



MANAL AL ALEM PACK AND GO SET with thermal bag, Dhs236 at Citrusstv.com



MIRROR TRAY (BIG RUST), Dhs99 at Homes R Us



ASKELL LANTERN, Dhs85 at Pan Emirates Furniture





VIDE POCHE TRAYS, Dhs880 at Asprey



GRAY MOTHER OF PEARL BOWL, Dhs1,970 at Ethan Allen



STYLE TREASURE GLASSES, Dhs75 at Valleydez



GREEN BOX WITH GOLD ACCENTS, Dhs29 at 2XL Furniture



3 TRAY CHOCOLATE BOX WITH 60 CHOCOLATES, Dhs420 at Angelina



PARISA HAMIDI SERVING PLATTER, Dhs295 at Virgule-shop.com



BLUE TEA LIGHT LANTERN, Dhs75 at Lakeland



AMBER 3 TIER SERVING TROLLEY, Dhs695 at Home Centre

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED



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Home Cooking

Inspiring recipes for easy everyday meals and stylish weekend entertaining

Make it tonight

New, no-fuss and delicious – easy suppers to see you through the week.

Recipes CASSIE BEST

Photographs ROB STREETER

Sticky jerk salmon with mango slaw

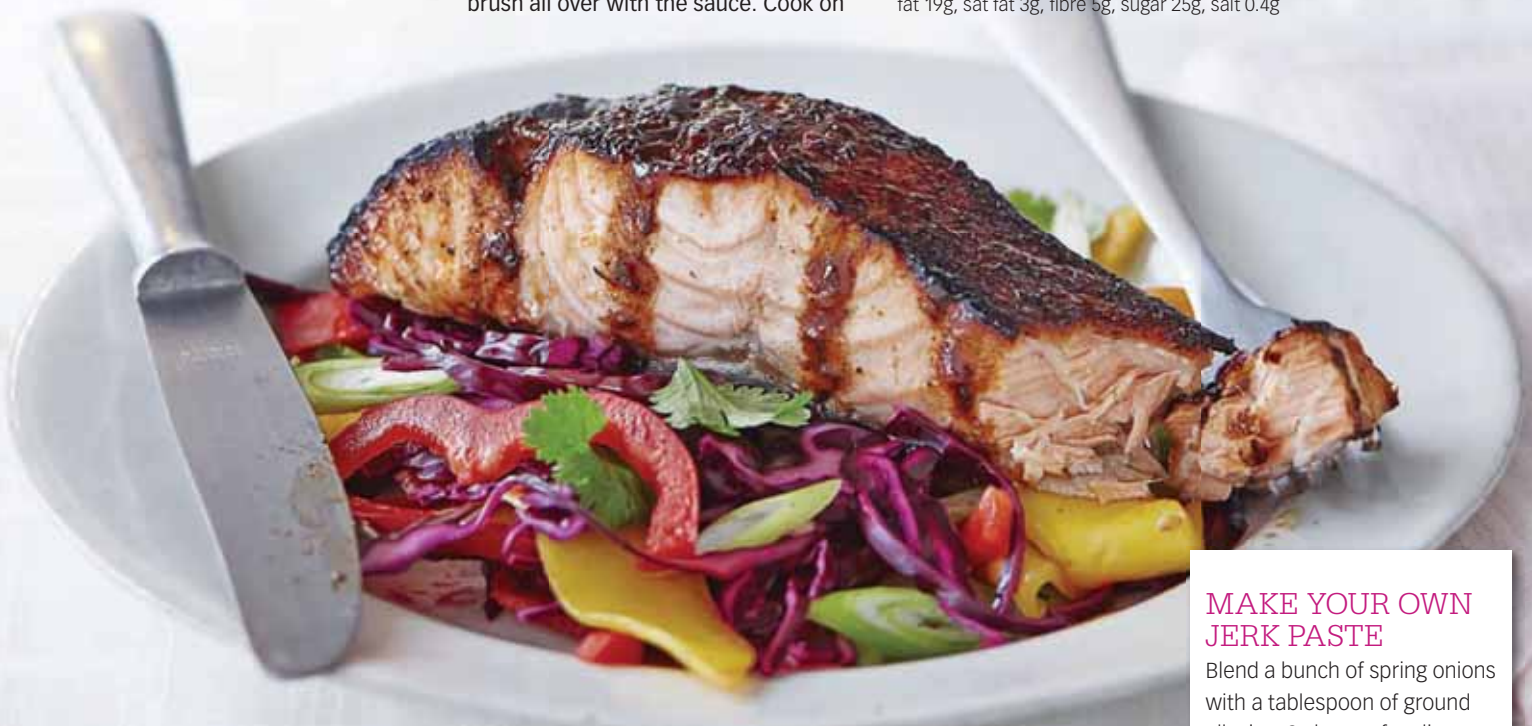
SERVES 4 ● PREP 25 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS Easy Low cal Folate Vit C Omega-3 2 of 5-a-day

2 heaped tbsp jerk paste
2 tbsp clear honey
4 salmon fillets
Juice of 2 limes
½ red cabbage, core removed, thinly sliced
1 firm but ripe mango, skin removed, thinly sliced
1 red pepper, thinly sliced
6 spring onions, thinly sliced on an angle
Small bunch of coriander, leaves picked

1 Heat the grill to medium-high. Mix the jerk paste and 1 tbsp honey together in a bowl. Place the salmon fillets on a foil-lined baking tray and brush all over with the sauce. Cook on the top shelf for 8-10 mins or until just cooked through (move the tray down a shelf if the salmon starts getting too caramelised).

2 Meanwhile, put the remaining honey, lime juice and some seasoning in a large bowl and mix together. Add the red cabbage, mango, pepper, spring onions and coriander, and toss through the dressing. Serve the salmon on a pile of the slaw.

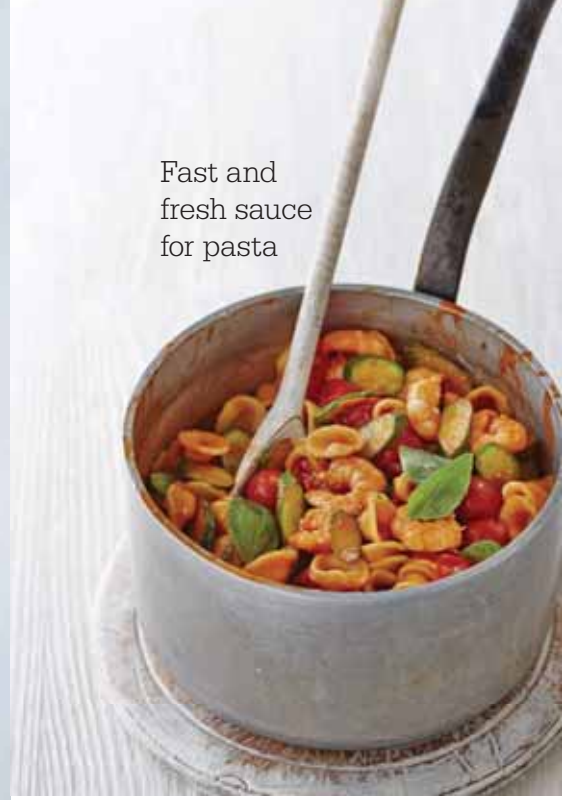
PER SERVING 402 kcals, protein 33g, carbs 26g, fat 19g, sat fat 3g, fibre 5g, sugar 25g, salt 0.4g



MAKE YOUR OWN JERK PASTE

Blend a bunch of spring onions with a tablespoon of ground allspice, 2 cloves of garlic, chopped green chilli, a teaspoon of thyme leaves, and vegetable oil. season with sea salt and black pepper.

Food styling KATY GREENWOOD | Styling JENNY IGGLEDEN



Fast and fresh sauce for pasta

Creamy tomato, courgette & prawn pasta

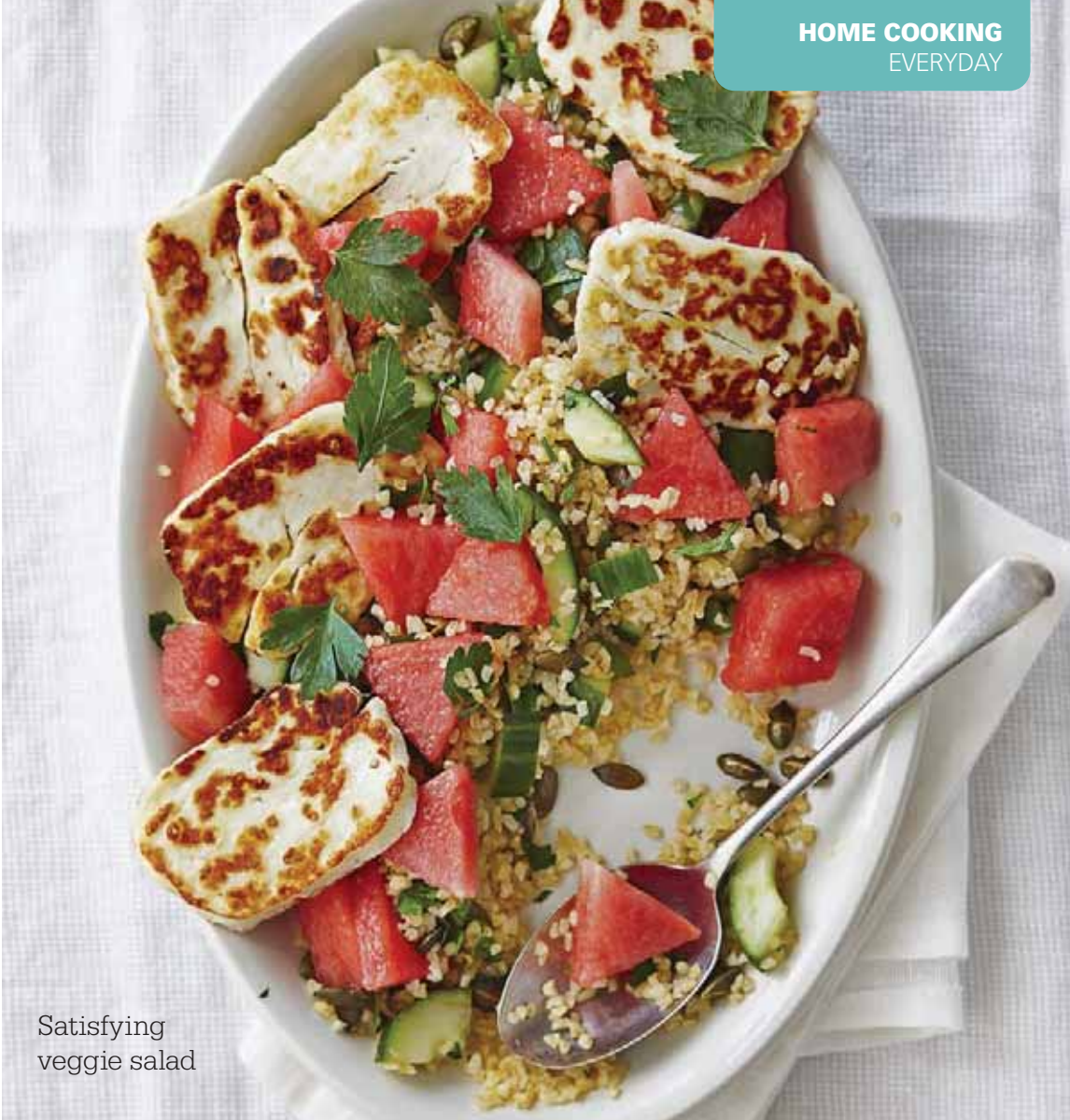
SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy Low fat

Folate Fibre Vit C 2 of 5-a-day Good for you

1 tbsp olive oil
2 fat garlic cloves, thinly sliced
2 large or 400g baby courgettes, sliced
400g orecchiette pasta, or any other small pasta shape
2 x 400g cans cherry tomatoes
Good pinch of sugar
200g raw prawns, peeled
100g half-fat crème fraîche
Small pack basil, leaves only, torn

1 Heat the oil in a large pan, add the garlic and sizzle for a few mins, then add the courgettes and cook for a few mins more until starting to soften. Cook the pasta following pack instructions.
2 Add the tomatoes, sugar and seasoning to the pan, stir and simmer, uncovered, for about 10 mins while the pasta cooks.
3 Add the prawns to the sauce and bubble until they just turn pink. Drain the pasta and add to the sauce with the crème fraîche. Simmer for another 1-2 mins, then add the basil and serve.

PER SERVING 533 kcals, protein 25g, carbs 91g, fat 8g, sat fat 3g, fibre 6g, sugar 11g, salt 0.5g



Satisfying veggie salad

Halloumi & watermelon bulghur salad

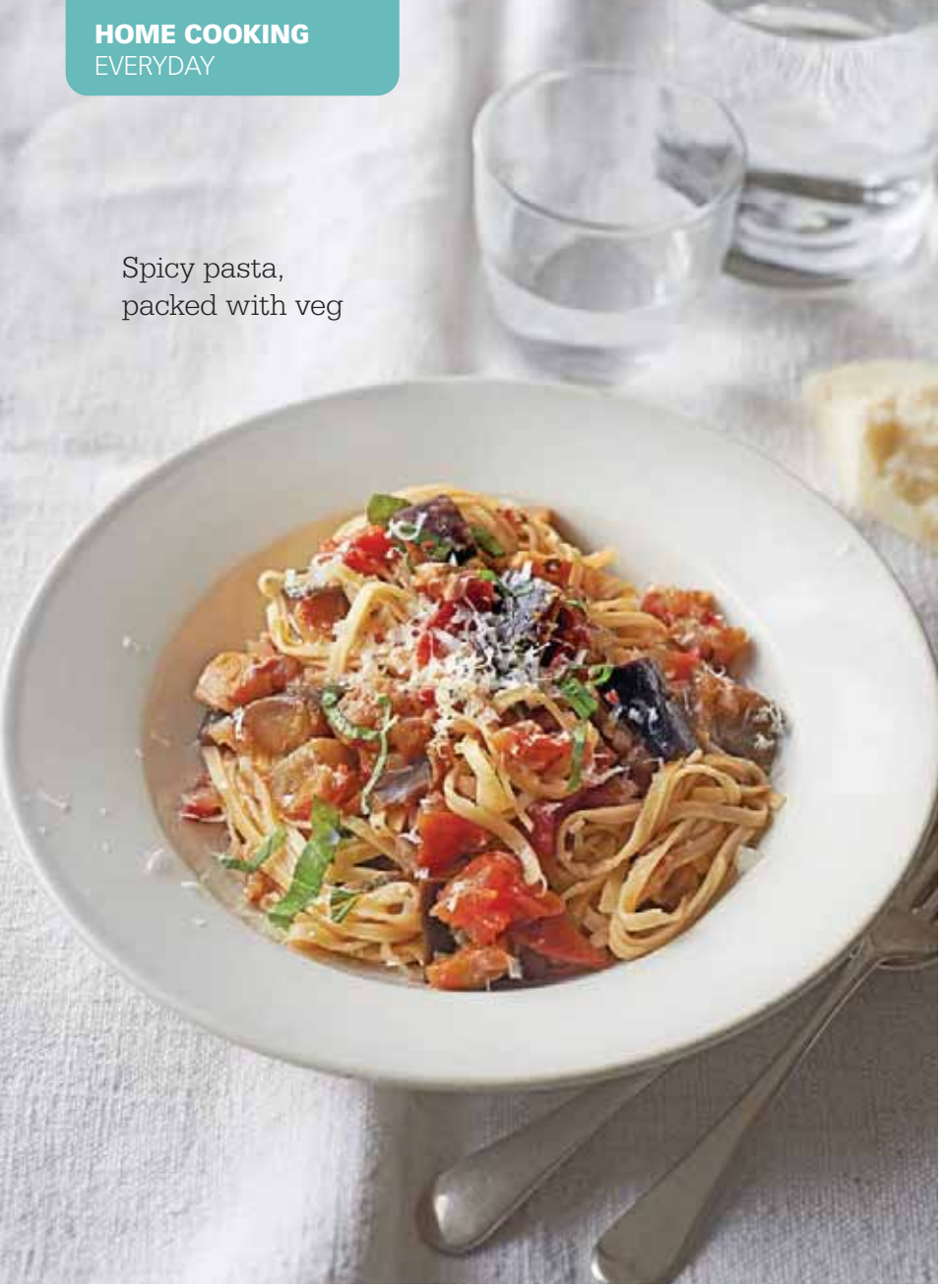
SERVES 4 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS Easy V Vit C Iron 2 of 5-a-day

200g bulghur wheat
50g pumpkin seeds
3 tbsp olive or rapeseed oil
250g pack halloumi, cut into 10-12 slices
1 cucumber, halved lengthways, seeds scooped out and cut into chunks
Large bunch of either parsley, mint, coriander or basil, or a mixture, chopped, reserving a few leaves to serve
Zest and juice of 2 lemons
¼ watermelon, cut into chunks, or a 400g pack ready-prepared

1 Boil the kettle. Put the bulghur wheat in a bowl with some seasoning, pour over enough hot water to just cover, then cover with cling film and set aside to absorb the liquid while you prepare the remaining ingredients.
2 Heat a large frying pan and add the pumpkin seeds, toast for a few mins until the seeds start to crackle and pop, then tip into a dish and set aside. Heat a drizzle of oil in the pan. Add the halloumi slices and fry for 2-3 mins on each side or until golden.
3 Unwrap the bulghur wheat and check that it is tender (if not, re-cover and leave for another 5 mins). All the water should have been absorbed, but if not, drain the excess. Add the remaining oil, the cucumber, herbs, lemon zest and juice, and pumpkin seeds to the bulghur wheat and toss well. Transfer to a platter, top with the watermelon and halloumi, and scatter with the reserved herbs.

PER SERVING 504 kcals, protein 20g, carbs 46g, fat 26g, sat fat 12g, fibre 3g, sugar 10g, salt 1.9g >>

Spicy pasta, packed with veg





Aubergine & chilli tagliolini

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy V Low cal 2 of 5-a-day Good for you

2 tbsp olive oil
1 large aubergine, cut into bite-sized cubes
1 small onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 red chilli, deseeded and chopped
1 tsp dried oregano
400g fresh tomatoes, roughly chopped, or 400g can chopped tomatoes
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
400g dried tagliolini pasta or linguini
Small bunch of basil, roughly chopped
50g pecorino, grated, or vegetarian alternative

1 Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan and cook the aubergine for 5 mins until starting to brown and soften.
2 Add the onion, garlic, chilli and oregano, and cook for a few mins. Add the tomatoes, balsamic vinegar and about 200ml water, then reduce heat and simmer gently for about 20 mins, until the tomatoes are reduced and really softened, and the sauce is thickened.
3 Bring a large pan of water to the boil and cook the tagliolini following pack instructions. Drain the pasta and return to the pan. Add the sauce and toss well into the pasta with the basil. Serve with the grated pecorino.

PER SERVING 495 kcals, protein 17g, carbs 79g, fat 12g, sat fat 4g, fibre 9g, sugar 9g, salt 0.8g

Smoking chilli chicken & sweetcorn pizza

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 20 MINS Easy 1 of 5-a-day

100g barbecue sauce
1-2 tbsp chipotle sauce, or more if you like it spicy
2 large ready-made pizza bases
175g mozzarella, grated (ready-grated is fine)
200g can sweetcorn, drained
300g jar red peppers, drained and torn into slices
200g cooked sliced chicken
Handful of coriander, leaves only
2 fat green chillies, sliced, seeds removed (optional)

1 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Mix the barbecue and chipotle sauce in a bowl. Place the pizza bases on 2 large baking trays and spread over the sauce. Scatter the mozzarella over the pizzas, then top with the sweetcorn, peppers and chicken.
2 Bake for 20 mins, swapping the trays over halfway through cooking, until the cheese has melted and the pizza is piping hot. Scatter with the coriander and the green chillies, if you like it extra spicy.

PER SERVING 494 kcals, protein 31g, carbs 64g, fat 13g, sat fat 7g, fibre 2g, sugar 12g, salt 2.6g GF

5 ways to fill a baguette

Francis Villaluna, Head Chef of Baguette Express shares flavoursome filling ideas for baguette sandwiches. Photographs ANAS CHERUR

Mediterranean grilled vegetable panini

SERVES 4 ● PREP 40MINS ● COOK 10-15MINS Easy

Slice **100g zucchini**, **100g baby marrow**, **100g eggplant**, **100g red capsicum**, **100g green capsicum**, **100g yellow capsicum** and marinate with **30g balsamic syrup** reduction, **120ml balsamic vinegar**, **15g chopped garlic**, **60ml olive oil**, **50g salt** and **20g black pepper**. Set aside for 30 mins and then grill at 120C for 10-15 mins. Place the grilled vegetables on the baguette and top with **60g barbecue sauce**, **20g romaine lettuce** and **20g grated cheddar cheese**. Press in a panini grill (optional) for 2 mins and serve with chips or potato wedges.

Firecracker chicken

SERVES 4 ● PREP 30 MINS | ● COOK 10 MINS Easy

Slice **100g roasted chicken** and set aside. Dice **90g of mixed peppers**, **30g jalapenos** and **50g red onions** and mix together with **50ml peri peri sauce** and the roast chicken. Add the firecracker chicken mix to a sliced baguette and serve with coleslaw on the side.

Paneer tikka

SERVES 4 ● PREP 40 MIN ● COOK 8-10 MINS

In a bowl, mix together **50g yoghurt**, **5g ginger garlic paste**, and **1g of chilli powder**, **tandoori powder** and **garam masala** each. Add **2g salt**, **5ml mustard oil** and **a few drops of lemon juice** and combine. Cut **200g paneer** into rectangular slices and marinate in the mixture and set aside for 2-3 hrs. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 120C for 10-12mins. Warm a **6 inch baguette** for 30 secs in a microwave and place **80g pickles** on it. Top with the **paneer tikka** and add **3 fresh tomato slices**, **80g chopped onions** and **25g romaine lettuce**. The baguette can be pressed in a panini grill for 2 mins, if you prefer to serve it hot.

Beef meatballs

SERVES 4 ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS Easy

Blend together **2g fresh herbs**, **5g chopped garlic** and **5g salt** and **pepper** each, with **80ml olive oil** and **100ml tomato-based pasta sauce**. Defrost **400g frozen cooked beef meatballs** and toss together with the sauce. Slice a **10 inch baguette** and smear **5g butter** on both sides. Assemble **60g of mixed peppers** and **lettuce** on one side of the bread and top with the meatball mix. Serve with chips or potato wedges on the side.

Coronation chicken

SERVES 4 ● PREP 30 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS Easy

Mix **125g mayonnaise**, **10g madras curry paste** and **5g mango chutney** with **20ml olive oil**. Add **175g sliced roast chicken** and mix again. Place **60g salad mix of cucumbers, tomatoes and lettuce** on a baguette and top with the chicken mix. GF



Mediterranean grilled vegetable panini

Text and styling NICOLA MONTEATH

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BBC GoodFood MIDDLE EAST

Low-cal & so satisfying

This selection of fast and filling suppers all weigh in at 300 calories or less, but the combination of delicious ingredients will keep you satisfied and energised.

Recipes SARA BUENFELD Photographs SAM STOWELL

300 calories or less

THE SECRET TO HEALTHY LOW-CALORIE COOKING

If you're cutting down on calories, it's important to eat a variety of ingredients to ensure you're getting all the nutrients your body needs.

ENERGY BALANCE These recipes include lean protein (fish, poultry, beans and pulses) as well as slow-burn carbs (wholegrains) to keep you energised. Protein helps you feel fuller for longer and, unlike fat and carbs, our bodies don't store it – we break it down into smaller components called amino acids to make muscle, hormones and enzymes. There's a good proportion of protein in these dishes so you'll feel satisfied, even though the calorie count is low.

FABULOUS FATS Even low-calorie dishes should contain some fat because vitamins A, D, E and K are fat-soluble, so they need to be eaten with fat for the body to absorb them. We've included 'good' fats from nuts, seeds, olives and oily fish, and slashed the saturated fat (typically found in full-fat dairy and processed red meat). Since our recipes are cooked from scratch, you'll be reducing your intake of trans fats (man-made hard fats) found in processed foods.

VITAL VITAMINS In addition, these recipes include plenty of plant foods such as beans, pulses, nuts, seeds, fruit and veg, so they're brimming with vitamins, minerals and phyto-nutrients – essential for keeping you in tip-top health.

DO THE MATHS If you stick to the amounts we've suggested, there's no need for complicated calculations or weighing, because we've done all the hard work for you. Remember, these low-calorie dishes are aimed at someone who wants to lose weight or enjoy lighter meals during the summer – we wouldn't recommend sticking with them on a long-term basis.

– Nutritional therapist Kerry Torrens

Food styling SARA BUENFELD | Styling JENNY IGGLEDEN; Diabetics, pregnant women, young adults, children and anyone on medication should consult their GP before starting a calorie-restricted diet.

Salmon with miso vegetables

SERVES 2 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 9 MINS Easy Low cal

Folate Vit C Omega-3 2 of 5-a-day

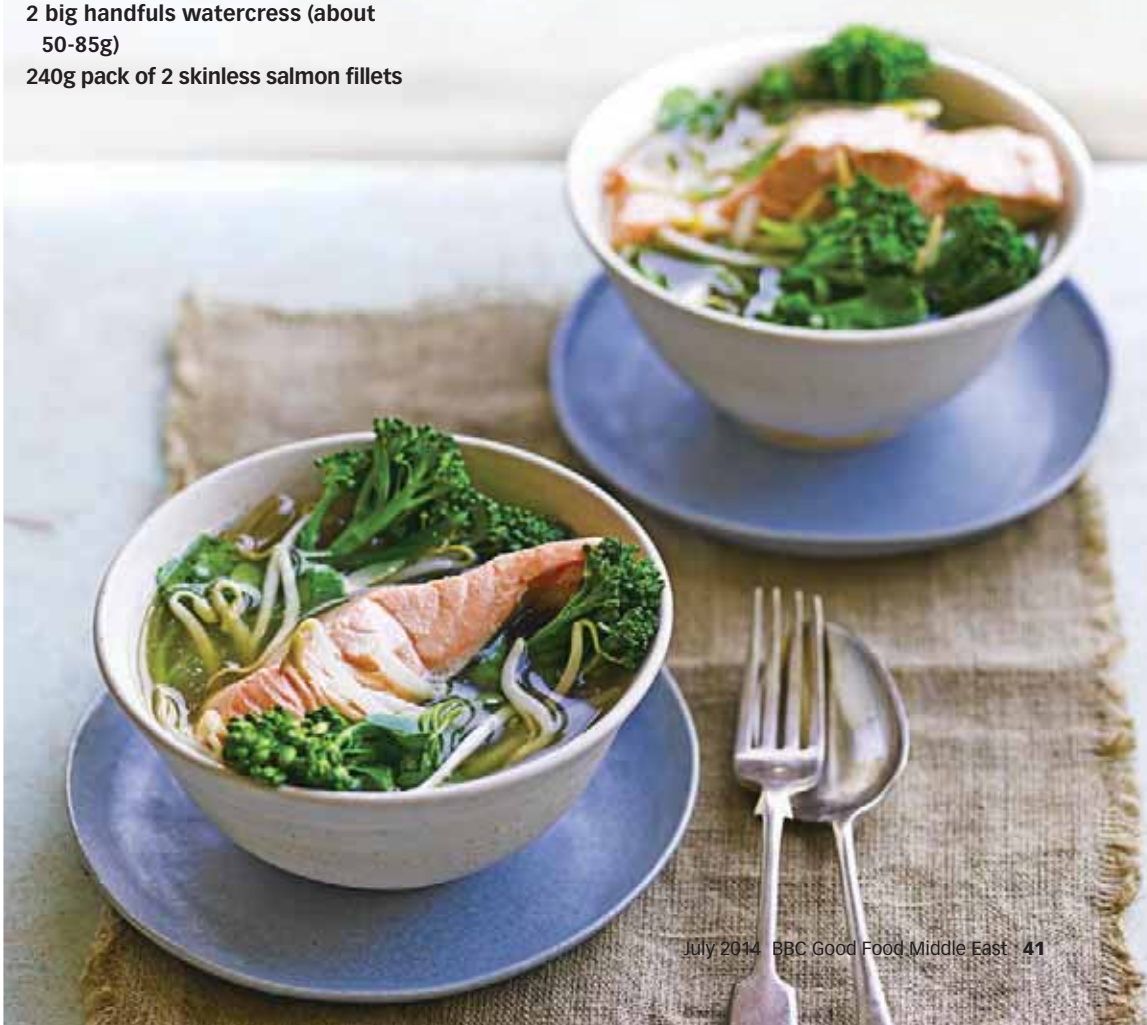
18g instant miso soup
2 garlic cloves, finely grated
1 tbsp rice vinegar
100g thin-stemmed broccoli, cut into lengths and small florets
4 spring onions, chopped
100g beansprouts
2 big handfuls watercress (about 50-85g)
240g pack of 2 skinless salmon fillets

1 Make up the soup mix in a large pan with 500ml water and bring to the boil with the garlic and vinegar. Add the broccoli and spring onions, cover and cook for 5 mins.

2 Stir in the beansprouts and watercress, top with the salmon and cover again. Cook for 4 mins until the salmon flakes easily. Serve in bowls with a fork and spoon.

PER SERVING 282 kcals, protein 31g, carbs 6g, fat 15g, sat fat 3g, fibre 5g, sugar 4g, salt 1.2g >>

282 kcals
Try to eat oily fish twice a week. Salmon is filling, as well as rich in omega-3.





269 kcals
Lean red meat is rich in iron, B vitamins, zinc and protein. It's healthy if eaten in moderation

Seared steak with celery & pepper caponata

SERVES 2 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS Easy ❄ CAPONATA ONLY

Low cal | Low fat | Folate | Fibre | Vit C | Iron | 3 of 5-a-day | Good for you | Gluten Free

200g extra-lean fillet steak
140g fresh spinach
FOR THE CAPONATA
Oil spray
1 red onion, halved and sliced
2 garlic cloves, cut into slivers
400g can chopped tomatoes
2 celery sticks, sliced
1 orange pepper, deseeded, quartered and sliced
25g pitted Kalamata olives, halved (about 8)
1 tbsp capers
½ tsp dried oregano or 1 tbsp fresh
1 tsp balsamic vinegar

1 For the caponata, spray a large, wide non-stick pan with 3 sprays of oil, and add the onion and garlic. Cover and cook for 5 mins, stirring halfway through to brown them.
2 Tip in the tomatoes and a can of water, then stir in all the other caponata ingredients. Cover the pan and leave to simmer for 30 mins.
3 Heat a griddle or small non-stick frying pan. Generously grind black pepper over the steak and sear on both sides, about 6 mins in total, until cooked to your liking. Allow to rest while you wilt the spinach in a covered pan on a low heat.
4 Spoon the caponata onto 2 serving plates, top with the spinach, then slice the beef and arrange on top.

PER SERVING 269 kcals, protein 27g, carbs 19g, fat 10g, sat fat 3g, fibre 9g, sugar 15g, salt 1.1g

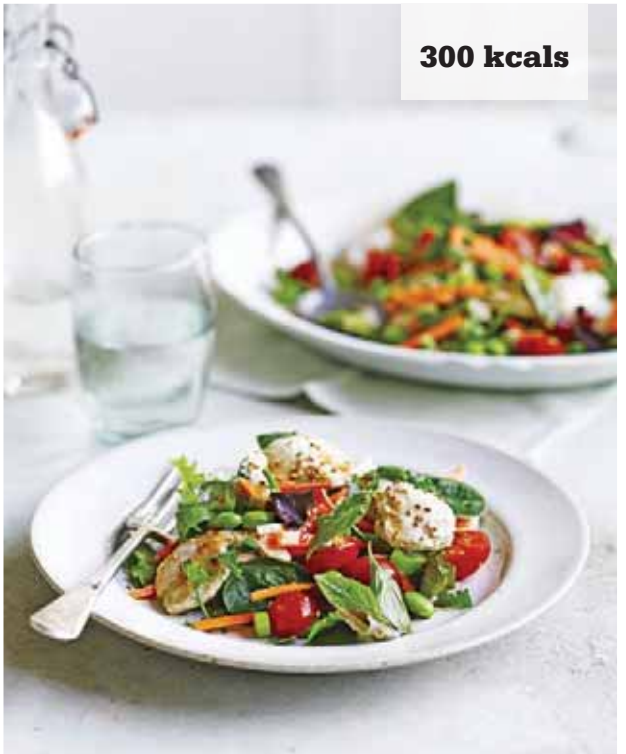
Sesame chicken salad

SERVES 2 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS Easy ❄ Low cal | Low fat | Folate | Fibre | Vit C | 2 of 5-a-day | Good for you

2 skinless chicken breasts
85g frozen soya beans
1 large carrot, finely cut into thin matchsticks
4 spring onions, finely sliced
140g cherry tomatoes, halved
Small bunch of coriander, chopped
Small handful of Thai or ordinary basil leaves, chopped if large
85g herb or baby salad leaves
1 tsp toasted sesame seeds
FOR THE DRESSING
Grated zest and juice of 1 small lime
1 tsp fish sauce
1 tsp sesame oil
2 tsp sweet chilli sauce

1 Put the chicken in a pan and pour over cold water to cover. Tip the soya beans into a steamer. Bring the pan to a gentle simmer, then cook the chicken for 8 mins with the beans above.
2 Meanwhile, mix the dressing ingredients in a large bowl. When the chicken is cooked, slice and toss in the dressing along with the beans, carrot, onions, tomatoes, coriander and basil. Mix really well, pile onto the salad leaves and sprinkle with the sesame seeds

PER SERVING 300 kcals, protein 44g, carbs 14g, fat 7g, sat fat 1g, fibre 7g, sugar 12g, salt 1.0g





Spiced cod with quinoa salad & mint chutney

SERVES 2 ● PREP 5 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy Low cal Low fat Iron 2 of 5-a-day Good for you

40g quinoa (or 85g pre-cooked quinoa)
3 tbsp each chopped mint and coriander
150g pot 0% natural yoghurt
1 garlic clove
¼ tsp turmeric
Pinch of cumin seeds
2 x 150g chunky fillets skinless white fish, such as sustainable cod
¼ cucumber, finely diced
1 small red onion, finely chopped
4 tomatoes, chopped
Good squeeze of lemon juice

1 Tip the quinoa (if not pre-cooked) into a pan, cover with water and boil, covered, for 25 mins, checking the water level to make sure it doesn't boil dry. Drain well.
2 Meanwhile, put 2 tbsp each of the mint and coriander in a bowl. Add the yoghurt and garlic, and blitz with a hand blender until smooth. Stir 2 tbsp of the herby yoghurt with the turmeric and cumin, then add the fish and turn in the mixture to completely coat.
3 Turn the grill to High. Arrange the fish in a shallow heatproof dish and grill for 8-10 mins, depending on thickness, until it flakes. Toss the quinoa with the cucumber, onion, tomatoes, lemon juice and remaining herbs. Spoon onto a plate, add the fish and spoon round the mint chutney, or add it at the table.

PER SERVING 272 kcals, protein 36g, carbs 24g, fat 4g, sat fat 1g, fibre 3g, sugar 13g, salt 0.4g



Chilli-stuffed peppers with feta topping

SERVES 2 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS Easy V Low cal Low fat Calcium Folate Fibre Vit C 4 of 5-a-day Gluten Free

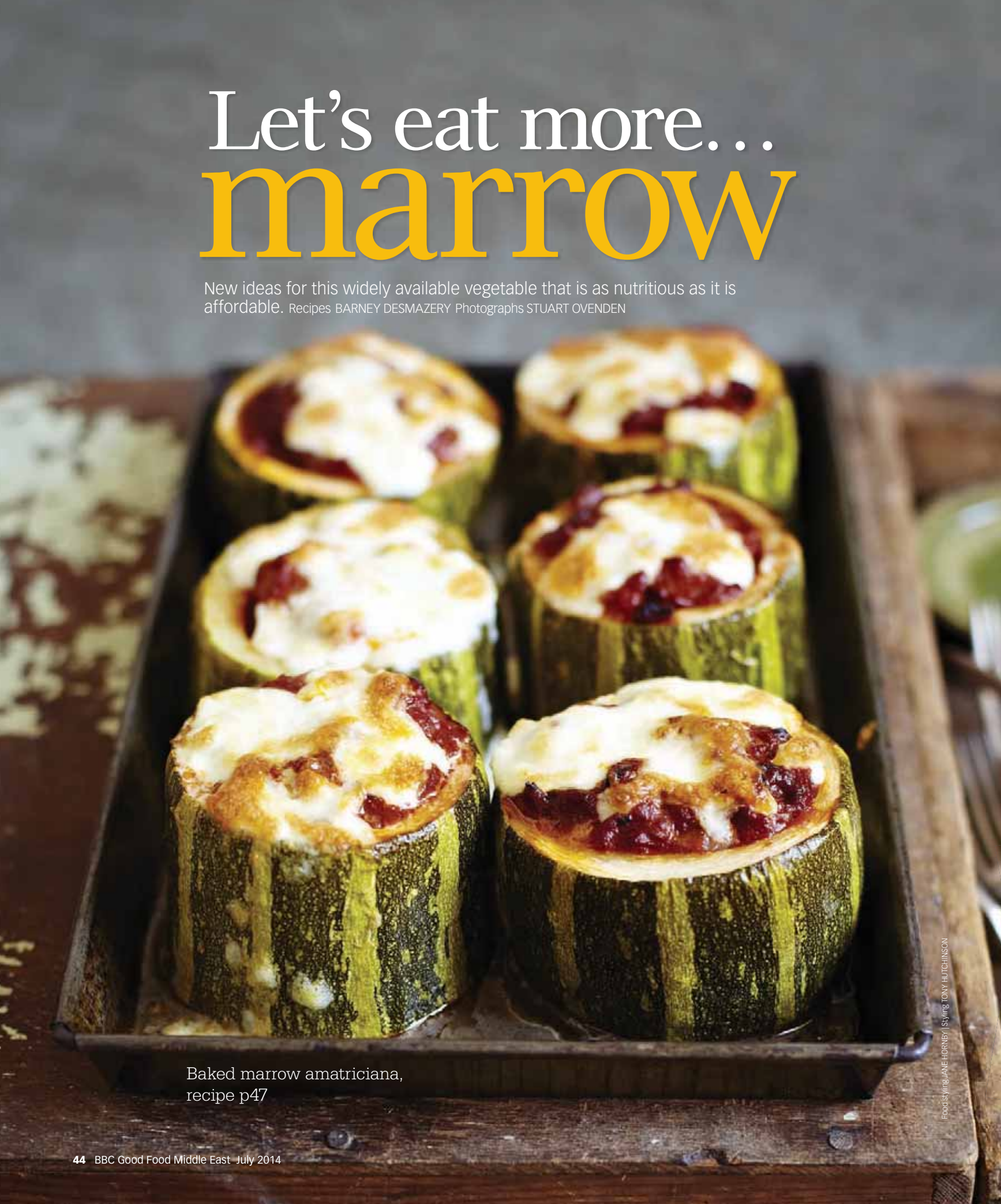
2 large peppers, halved, deseeded but stalks left on
1 tsp each ground cumin and coriander
400g can chopped tomatoes
1 red onion, halved and sliced
1 garlic clove, finely grated
1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
1 small aubergine, cut into small cubes
220g can kidney beans (don't drain them)
Small bunch of coriander, chopped
1 large egg
25g low-fat feta, finely grated
50g low-fat fromage frais
2 handfuls rocket
Lime wedges, for squeezing over

1 Heat oven to 190C/170C fan. Place the pepper halves in a shallow baking dish, skin-side up, and roast for 15-20 mins.
2 Meanwhile, tip the spices into a pan and warm briefly to release their flavour. Tip in the tomatoes and stir in the onion, garlic, chilli, aubergine and kidney beans with their juice. Cover the pan and cook for 20 mins, stirring occasionally. Try not to add any extra liquid; the mixture should be quite dry. Stir in the coriander.
3 Meanwhile, beat the egg with the feta and fromage frais. Turn the peppers over and pile the aubergine mixture into each one, packing it down as much as you can. Top with the feta mixture and return to the oven for 10 mins more until the topping has lightly set. Don't worry if some of it flows off, as it will just set in the dish. Serve the peppers on the rocket with lime wedges for squeezing over.

PER SERVING 288 kcals, protein 19g, carbs 39g, fat 7g, sat fat 3g, fibre 15g, sugar 26g, salt 1.3g GF

Let's eat more... marrow

New ideas for this widely available vegetable that is as nutritious as it is affordable. Recipes BARNEY DESMAZERY Photographs STUART OVENDEN



Baked marrow amatriciana, recipe p47

Food styling JANE HORNBY | Styling TONY HUTCHINSON

A marrow is a cucurbit, which means it's from the same family as the melon, cucumber and squash – just like a courgette. In fact, most people tend to get confused between a courgette and marrow, and the two can also be swapped over for each other in many recipes.

According to often *BBC Gardeners' World magazine,* "Basically the two are the same thing. If you leave a fruit on the plant too long it grows into a marrow, and if you pick a marrow when small it counts as a courgette."

Just like the courgette, marrows can be insipid when cooked badly. Traditionally, they have been paired with bland items such as simmered mince or white sauce. With mild-tasting veg, you need to pile on the flavours – citrus, chilli, garlic, bacon, spices and robust herbs, like rosemary and thyme, all elevate the marrow wonderfully. Then you can steam, bake, boil, fry or roast it.

In the kitchen, you want the smallest marrow you can get – no bigger than your forearm – and usually, the variety that we get here are even smaller. Very large marrows can be very watery and are only fit for chutney.

A good-sized marrow will have edible skin and seeds but if you are roasting or frying, you might want to still remove the seeds and stringy middles so that you just enjoy the flesh.

Marrow is extremely low in calories with no fat or cholesterol, and is a good source of dietary fibre, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron and calcium.





Healthy yet indulgent

Smashed curried marrow

SERVES 6 AS A SIDE DISH ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 30 MINS Easy V Low fat Low cal Vit C 2 of 5-a-day Good for you Gluten Free

Here is a delicious side dish that will spice up a Friday lunch. It goes well with roast lamb or chicken.

1 marrow, peeled and cut into large chunks
2 tbsp sunflower oil
2 tsp black mustard seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 large onion, finely sliced
2 garlic cloves, crushed
½ tsp turmeric
½ tsp chilli powder
1 tsp ground coriander
Juice of ½ a lemon
Small pack of coriander, roughly chopped

1 Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Simmer the marrow for 5-7 mins until softened, then drain well. Heat the oil in a large shallow pan and fry the mustard and cumin seeds until they start to crackle. Add the onion, garlic and remaining spices, and fry for 10 mins until soft and starting to brown. Add the marrow and cook for 5-10 mins until the liquid has evaporated and the marrow is really soft.
2 Smash the marrow with a wooden spoon to lightly crush and soften the edges. Serve seasoned with the lemon juice and chopped coriander.

PER SERVING 121 kcals, protein 3g, carbs 13g, fat 7g, sat fat 1g, fibre 3g, sugar 11g, salt none >>



Delicious way to make dessert healthier!

Marrow & pecan cake with maple icing

CUTS INTO 16 SLICES ● PREP 25 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 20 MINS Easy UN-ICED

Like carrot, courgette, parsnip or beetroot, using grated marrow in a homely cake gives it a wonderful texture and will have people guessing what the secret ingredient is.

250ml sunflower oil, plus extra for greasing
300g self-raising flour
3 tsp mixed spice
½ tsp baking powder
250g light soft brown sugar
4 large eggs
Finely grated zest and juice of 1 orange
300g marrow flesh, coarsely grated and squeezed of any liquid (or roughly chopped if using from the recipe opposite)
200g pecans, roughly chopped
FOR THE ICING
50g butter, softened
250g cream cheese
4 tbsp maple syrup

1 Heat oven to 160C/140C fan. Grease and line a 22cm round springform cake tin with baking parchment. Sift the flour, spice and baking powder into a bowl and crumble in the sugar. In a separate bowl, beat the eggs with the orange zest and juice, then pour in the oil. Add the marrow and 150g of the pecans to the oil mixture, then beat into the flour until combined. Tip into the cake tin, smooth the top and bake for 1 hr 20 mins, or until a skewer comes out clean. Leave to cool for 30 mins in the tin before removing and placing on a wire rack to cool completely.

2 While the cake is cooling, make the icing by beating all the ingredients together. When the cake has cooled, use a spatula to spread the icing over the top. Sprinkle over the rest of the pecans to decorate and serve.

PER SERVING 470 kcals, protein 5g, carbs 32g, fat 36g, sat fat 9g, fibre 2g, sugar 19g, salt 0.4g



Baked marrow amatriciana

SERVES 3 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 15 MINS Easy ❄ SAUCE ONLY

Calcium Vit C 3 of 5-a-day Gluten Free

As marrow has such a mild flavour, you need to serve it with a more-than-an-average tomato sauce.

1 marrow, cut into 6cm thick slices
125g ball mozzarella, grated
FOR THE AMATRICIANA SAUCE
2 tbsp olive oil
150g pack beef bacon
1 large onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, chopped
Large sprig of thyme
1 bay leaf
Sprinkle of golden caster sugar
2-3 tbsp vinegar
2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes
1 large glass of non-alcoholic red wine
Pinch of dried chilli flakes

1 For the sauce, heat half the oil in a pan and sizzle the pancetta for 5 mins, until just starting to crisp. Then add the onion, garlic, thyme, bay and sugar, and cook until the onions are golden. Splash in the vinegar, sizzle for a moment then tip in the tomatoes. Swoosh the wine around the tomato tins to wash out every last bit and tip into the sauce. Season with chilli and a pinch of salt and simmer for 30 mins until rich and thick.
2 Meanwhile, heat the oven to 200C/180C fan. Scoop out the middle of the marrow, leaving a little in the bottom to form a base. Keep the middle to make the cake (opposite) or discard. Drizzle a baking dish with a little oil, arrange the marrow in the dish and roast for 30 mins.
3 Spoon the sauce into the middle of each marrow slice, cover with foil and bake for 30 mins. Remove the foil, scatter over the mozzarella and return to the oven for 10 mins until the cheese has melted and the marrow is tender.

PER SERVING 474 kcals, protein 22g, carbs 18g, fat 32g, sat fat 13g, fibre 4g, sugar 16g, salt 2.2g GF



Hearty lamb

This tasty meat makes a comforting supper, whatever style you cook it in.



Lamb & vegetable tray bake

SERVES 4 ● PREP 15 MINS ● COOK 40 MINS Easy

50g fresh white breadcrumbs
250g lamb mince
1 egg, beaten
2 onions, halved
Large handful of mint, chopped
2 large potatoes, cut into wedges
2 courgettes, cut into batons
12 cherry tomatoes
2 tbsp olive oil
50g feta, crumbled

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Pop the breadcrumbs, lamb mince, egg and plenty of seasoning in a bowl. Grate in half an onion and sprinkle in half the chopped mint. Give everything a good mix and shape into 8 patties. Place on a large, shallow roasting tray.
2 Cut the remaining onion halves into wedges. Place them on the tray around the lamb patties with the potatoes, courgettes and cherry tomatoes. Drizzle with olive oil and season. Bake for around 40 mins, turning everything once, until the lamb is cooked through and the vegetables are tender. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with feta and remaining mint.

PER SERVING 388 kcals, protein 22g, carbs 35g, fat 19g, sat fat 7g, fibre 3g, sugar 7g, salt 0.77g



Lamb hotpot

SERVES 4 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 40 MINS Easy

100g butter
900g stewing lamb, cut into large chunks
3 lamb kidneys, sliced, fat removed
2 medium onions, chopped
4 carrots, peeled and sliced
25g plain flour
2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
500ml lamb or chicken stock
2 bay leaves
900g potatoes, peeled and sliced

1 Heat oven to 160C/140C fan. Heat a little butter in a large shallow casserole dish, brown the lamb in batches, lift to a plate, then repeat with the kidneys.
2 Fry the onions and carrots in the pan with a little more butter until golden. Sprinkle over the flour, allow to cook for a couple of mins, shake over the Worcestershire sauce, pour in the stock, then bring to the boil. Stir in the meat and bay leaves, then turn off the heat. Arrange the sliced potatoes on top of the meat, then dot over a little more butter. Cover, then place in the oven for about 1½ hrs until the potatoes are cooked.
3 Remove the lid, dot the potatoes with a little more butter, then turn the oven up to brown the potatoes, or finish under the grill for 5-8 mins until brown.

Per Serving 993 kcals, protein 70g, carbs 56g, fat 56g, sat fat 26g, fibre 7g, sugar 12g, salt 1.43g



Greek lamb with potatoes & olives

SERVES 4 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 1 HR 10 MINS Easy

800g medium-size potatoes, skin on, thinly sliced
4 large tomatoes, thinly sliced
1 aubergine, thinly sliced
4 garlic cloves, chopped
3 tbsp oregano leaves, plus extra to serve
85g pitted Kalamata olives, halved
5 tbsp olive oil, plus a drizzle
100g feta, crumbled
4 lamb steaks

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Layer half the potato, tomato and aubergine in a dish. Scatter over garlic, oregano and olives, and drizzle with oil and season as you go. Top with feta, then repeat the layers. Finish with potatoes and a little oil.
2 Bake for 50 mins or until the veg are tender (cover if they're getting too brown). Add the lamb, rub with more oil and season. Bake for 15-20 mins until the lamb is cooked. Scatter with oregano to serve.

PER SERVING 772 kcals, protein 38g, carbs 42g, fat 51g, sat fat 19g, fibre 6g, sugar 8g, salt 2.03g >>



Quick roast lamb

SERVES 2 ● PREP 5 MINS
● COOK 25 MINS Easy

400g new potatoes
250g Chantenay carrots, or large carrots cut into big chunks
1 tbsp oil, plus a little more for the lamb
1 sprig rosemary, leaves chopped
4 lamb chops or cutlets
Gravy and green beans or other veg, to serve (optional)

1 Heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Place the potatoes and carrots onto a baking tray, toss with the oil and rosemary, then season well. Roast for 15 mins on the top shelf until the veg is golden and almost tender.
2 Rub the lamb in a little oil, then season. Tuck the lamb in among the veg, then return to the oven for 8-10 mins, turning the lamb halfway through. Serve with some gravy and some green veg, if you like.

PER SERVING 606 kcals, protein 34g, carbs 44g, fat 32g, sat fat 13g, fibre 5g, sugar 13g, salt 0.7g



Lamb with chickpeas & rice

SERVES 2 ● PREP 5 MINS
● COOK 15 MINS Easy

½ tbsp sunflower oil
350g lamb neck fillet, trimmed of fat, thickly sliced
1 red pepper, deseeded and chopped
1 green chilli, deseeded and sliced
Small knob of fresh ginger, peeled and grated
250g cooked rice
300g can chickpeas, drained
20g coriander, chopped
Raita, for serving on the side (optional)

1 Heat the oil in a large pan, then fry the lamb until it starts to brown. Add the pepper and continue frying until it starts to soften.
2 Stir in the chilli and ginger, cook for 2 mins, then tip in the rice and chickpeas. Sprinkle over 3 tbsp water, then toss everything together until heated through. Stir in the coriander and serve as it is or with raita – either shop-bought or made by mixing plain yoghurt with grated cucumber and mint.

PER SERVING 706 kcals, protein 46g, carbs 58g, fat 34g, sat fat 13g, fibre 6g, sugar 5g, salt 3.21g GF

Kitchen notes

Nutrition advice, cooking tips and product picks for your pantry.



Reader tip of the month

To check if oil is hot enough for frying, stick a wooden spoon into it. It is ready if bubbles form around the spoon.

- Noura Fatayerjee

Got a great tip you want to share?
Get in touch with us on facebook or twitter

A new range

Now, getting restaurant-style results at home just got that little bit easier! The leading kitchen appliance supplier for hotels, culinary schools and restaurants, Electrolux, has finally made its way to the UAE to bring its sleek, easy-to-use cooking range for home use. The brand, which offers a variety of large appliances, has been in the global market for over 90 years, and is not only used by celebrity chefs such as Jean-Christophe Novelli, but is also the preferred appliance brand in a number of Michelin-starred restaurants across Europe. Available at Jashanmal stores, Sharaf DG, Plugins and Emax, prices from Dhs3,200.



SMART FOOD SWAPS



Summer cookin'

Cooking for just two? Sign up for the Dinnertime weekly box, which includes recipes and ingredients for one meat, chicken, fish, and vegetarian dish, totalling up to four meals – delivered right to your doorstep. It's also ideal if you're leaving your husband behind over the summer as he can use the leftovers for lunch the next day! Dhs300 per week, visit www.dinnertime.me.





Health update> TRAVEL NUTRITION

It's easy to catch a bug if you don't eat right when travelling. Here are 3 things to try, that will help keep your immune system strong, so you don't ruin your summer holidays with an illness:

- **Coconut water: This hydrating thirst quencher is rich in nutrients, and aids digestion as it is high in fibre. Choose fresh coconut water when possible.**
- **Pineapple: This tropical fruit is packed with vitamin A, C, calcium, potassium, fibre, and a digestive enzyme called bromelain, which help break down and absorb nutrients from food.**
- **Seaweed: The sea vegetable is a great snack-on-the go option, as it's a great source of vitamins A, B, C and E, as well as iron and protein.**

Look what we found!

3 great new products for your kitchen



Enjoy grilled chicken and shrimp with Bim's Kitchen African Chili and Coconut Relish, to give it a more exotic, spicy touch. Dhs62 at Jones the Grocer.



The all-new Super Milk from Al Rawabi contains vitamins A, D and E, as well as calcium and folic acid. From Dhs3.50 for a 500ml bottle, at all leading supermarkets.

We're snacking on the newest gourmet popcorn creation from Garrett popcorn, Pistachio Caramel crisp. Beautifully packaged and made with all-natural ingredients, it's a limited-edition offering for Ramadan! From Dhs22, available at their outlets in Dubai Mall.



Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED; SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Arabian delights

Try our **cover recipe!**

Light the candles and lay out your prettiest tableware. This elegant feast looks as gorgeous as it tastes – so it's worth making a little effort to create a special atmosphere for your guests.

Recipes SARAH COOK Photographs MYLES NEW

Food styling and styling SARAH COOK | Wine notes SARAH JANE EVANS MW



Roasted squash salad with creamy homemade labneh

SERVES 6 ● PREP 20 MINS PLUS 1-2 DAYS STRAINING ● COOK 40 MINS

Easy V 2 of 5-a-day

Labneh has a lovely richness like cheese but is much lower in fat. It's made by straining yoghurt, which gives you a thick, creamy result with a texture a bit like mascarpone. You can easily buy labneh of course, but it is really simple to make.

600g Greek yoghurt
1 fat butternut squash
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp pomegranate molasses
1 tbsp clear honey
2 tbsp vinegar
50g mixed baby leaves (or wild rocket, pea shoots or beet leaves)
1 small red onion, finely chopped
Seeds from 1 pomegranate or small handful of redcurrants

1 The day before, line a bowl with muslin. (If you don't have any muslin, line a sieve with a new J-cloth and set it over a bowl.) Stir ½ tsp salt into the yoghurt. Tip into the muslin, then bring the edges together to form a tight bundle, tie with string and hang over the bowl (or simply tip into the J-cloth lined sieve). Put in the fridge for 24-36 hrs to drain. You should be left with the firmer, soft cheese-like labneh. Keep chilled until ready to serve.
2 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Trim the top and bottom of the squash. Slice into 1in-thick rounds, halving any huge ones – you'll need at least 6 slices. Where there are seeds, scrape out with a teaspoon. Brush with 2 tbsp of the oil, season and roast for 30-40 mins on baking sheets, turning halfway, until tender. Leave at room temperature until ready to serve.
3 Spread a round base of labneh on 6 plates and divide the squash slices between them. Mix the remaining oil with the pomegranate molasses, honey, vinegar and seasoning, then toss with the salad leaves and onion. Divide between the plates, then scatter with pomegranate seeds or redcurrants.

PER SERVING 273 kcals, protein 8g, carbs 23g, fat 16g, sat fat 8g, fibre 4g, sugar 17g, salt 0.6g

Couscous with courgette, fried onions & herbs

SERVES 6 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 15 MINS Easy V Low fat

Folate Vit C 2 of 5-a-day Good for you

2 onions, sliced
2 tbsp olive oil
2 courgettes, grated
300g couscous
400g can chickpeas, drained
600ml vegetable or chicken stock
Juice of 2 lemons
6 spring onions, sliced
Small bunch each of mint, coriander and dill
Handful of rocket, chopped

1 Gently fry the onions in the oil until softened, then turn up the heat and fry until golden and crisping. Set aside. Mix the courgettes, couscous and chickpeas in a bowl. Pour over the hot stock, cover with cling film and set aside for at least 15 mins.
2 Discard the mint stalks, then roughly chop the leaves with the coriander and dill. Fork through the couscous to break it up, then stir in the lemon juice, fried onions, spring onions, herbs and rocket with some seasoning. Serve at room temperature with the chicken.

PER SERVING 290 kcals, protein 12g, carbs 45g, fat 5g, sat fat 1g, fibre 6g, sugar 4g, salt 0.6g >>

Moroccan roast chicken with apricots

SERVES 6 ● PREP 20 MINS PLUS 1-2 DAYS MARINATING ● COOK 50 MINS

Easy ❄ BEFORE COOKING 1 of 5-a-day

If you're roasting instead of barbecuing, and haven't spatchcocked a chicken before, you can simply roast the chickens whole – just increase the cooking time to that of a standard roast.

2 small chickens
6 tbsp olive oil
Small bunch of coriander
2 tbsp sumac (see Know-how)
1 tbsp each cumin and fennel seeds
2 tsp chilli flakes
2 garlic cloves
Zest and juice of 2 lemons
4 tbsp pomegranate molasses
250g natural yoghurt mixed with 1-2 pinches of saffron, to serve

FOR THE APRICOTS
12 apricots, halved and stoned
2 preserved lemons, rinsed, seeds removed, finely chopped
3 tbsp clear honey
1 tbsp orange blossom water
4 tbsp vinegar

1 Spatchcock the chickens – see Know-how (below), or ask your butcher to do it for you. Put the olive oil, coriander, sumac, cumin, fennel, chilli, garlic, lemon zest and juice, pomegranate molasses and some ground black pepper into a food processor or blender, and whizz to a paste. Divide between 2 large food bags, add a chicken to each, then squeeze out the air and seal before giving everything a good squelch to coat thoroughly. Marinate for 24-48 hrs in the fridge, turning and squishing every so often.
2 Fire up a barbecue and let the flames die down, or heat oven to 220C/200C fan. Lift the chicken out of the bags and season well with salt. Barbecue or roast the chicken for 25-30 mins on each side until crisp and cooked through. Set aside on a platter, loosely cover with foil, to rest while you do the apricots. If you roasted rather than barbecued, keep the tin juices warm for serving.
3 Put the apricots in a small, snug roasting tin. Whisk the preserved lemon, honey, orange blossom and vinegar with some seasoning. Pour over the apricots and roast, or sit on the barbecue, for 20 mins until soft.
4 Serve the chicken with any cooking juices, the apricots and saffron yoghurt.

PER SERVING 677 kcals, protein 55g, carbs 19g, fat 41g, sat fat 9g, fibre 3g, sugar 17g, salt 0.6g

STRESS-FREE WHEN YOU PREPARE AHEAD

This menu is designed so that you can make most of the food the day before – meaning a more relaxed meal for you and your guests.

- Prepare the homemade labneh, marinate your chickens and assemble the pud all 24 hours ahead of time – that way, serving will be simple, yet the food will look incredibly impressive.
- If your dinner party is a bit more spontaneous, swap the labneh for a tub of ricotta, make the pud by lunchtime and marinate the chicken for just as long as you can.

KNOW-HOW

- Sumac is a sweet and sour, lemony Middle Eastern spice made from ground berries.
- To spatchcock, lay the chicken breast-side down and cut with kitchen scissors along either side of the backbone, removing it. Flip the chicken over, open out like a book and press to an even thickness with your hands.





Make ahead, then decorate just before serving

Chocolate, raspberry & rose tart

CUTS INTO 15 SQUARES ● PREP 25 MINS PLUS AT LEAST 5 HRS CHILLING ● COOK 10 MINS A little effort

200g bourbon biscuits
85g crunchy amaretti biscuits
140g salted butter, melted
75g golden caster sugar
A few cubes best-quality Turkish delight, diced, to decorate
FOR THE FILLING
400ml double cream
200g dark chocolate, broken into chunks
200g milk chocolate, broken into chunks
140g raspberries, plus a handful more to decorate
FOR THE ROSE CREME FRAICHE
400g crème fraîche
2 tbsp icing sugar
2 tsp rose water

1 Double-bag the bourbon biscuits in food bags and bash to crumbs with a rolling pin. Repeat with the amaretti. Stir into the melted butter with the sugar. Lightly grease and line the base and sides of an 18 x 28cm rectangular loose-bottomed tart tin with baking parchment (or use a 22-23cm round tin). Press the biscuit mixture into the base and chill for 30 mins while you make the filling.

2 For the filling, put the cream and all the chocolate chunks in a heatproof bowl over a pan of barely simmering water. Gently melt, stirring very occasionally, until smooth and silky. Dot the raspberries over the base, pour over the chocolate and chill for at least 5 hrs until firm, or overnight.

3 To serve, remove from the fridge and, after 15 mins, lift from the tin, peel off the parchment and place on a serving plate. Scatter with a few more raspberries and the diced Turkish delight. Spoon the crème fraîche into a serving bowl, sift in the icing sugar and stir together with the rose water. Cut the tart into squares and serve with the rose crème fraîche.

PER SQUARE 572 kcals, protein 5g, carbs 38g, fat 45g, sat fat 28g, fibre 2g, sugar 33g, salt 0.3g

Serve with

Orange blossom Bellinis

SERVES 6 ● PREP 5 MINS ● NO COOK Easy

Mix together **175ml chilled blood orange juice** and **1 tbsp orange blossom water**, then divide between 6 cocktail glasses. Top up with chilled **sparkling grape juice** and serve with nibbles like **olives** and **salted almonds**.

PER SERVING 106 kcals, protein 1g, carbs 4g, fat none, sat fat none, fibre none, sugar 4g, salt none GF



Learn to: Make strawberry jam

Chef skills



James Martin, BBC host, uses strawberries while they are at their most flavoursome to create a gorgeous jam to enjoy for the rest of the year.

Photographs PETER CASSIDY



Strawberry jam

MAKES 3-4 JARS ● PREP 20 MINS
PLUS OVERNIGHT MACERATING
● COOK 40 MINS A little effort

1kg hulled strawberries (see Step 1, opposite)
750g jam sugar
Juice of 1 lemon
small knob of butter (optional)

EQUIPMENT YOU WILL NEED
Preserving pan
3-4 jam jars
Wax discs
Cellophane circles
Elastic bands
Fabric circles or squares (optional)
Labels

PER TBSP 35 kcals, protein none, carbs 9g, fat none, sat fat none, fibre none, sugar 9g, salt none

Try different flavour combinations

- Strawberry & vanilla Scrape the seeds from 2 vanilla pods into the strawberries as you toss with the sugar, then poke the scraped pods in, too. Take them out before ladling the jam into jars.
- Strawberry & black pepper Stir 1 tbsp cracked black peppercorns through the jam while it is cooling.
- Strawberry & rose water Add 2 tbsp rose water along with the lemon juice.
- Strawberry & tarragon Stir 2 tbsp chopped tarragon through the jam before ladling into jars.

STERILISING YOUR JARS

While the jam is settling (see step 7), wash your jars thoroughly in hot soapy water, rinse and leave to drip dry. Place in an oven at 160C/ 140C fan for 10 minutes. Allow to cool slightly before filling.

CHOOSE THE BEST

- Use a preserving pan that is enamel-lined or made of non-reactive metal, such as stainless steel (copper is also fine). Cast-iron and aluminium pans will react with the acidity of the jam, tainting it with a metallic taste. A wide pan – big enough so that the fruit comes no more than halfway up the side – is better, as the jam will reach setting point more quickly.
- Pick slightly underripe berries, as their pectin levels will be higher. (Pectin helps the jam to set.)

Food styling KATY GREENWOOD | Styling JENNY IGGLEDEN

"I've been making strawberry jam for as long as I can remember. My grandad grew several varieties on his allotment – the smaller strawberries were for eating and the larger ones were for me and my granny to make jam. I love the flavour of homemade jam and the pride you get from giving a jar away and saying you made it yourself."

- James Martin



Prepare the strawberries by wiping them with a piece of damp kitchen paper. (Wiping the strawberries rather than washing them ensures the fruit doesn't absorb lots of water – too much water and the jam won't set easily.) To hull the fruit, use a knife to cut a cone shape into the strawberry and remove the stem. Cut any large berries in half.



Put the strawberries in a bowl and gently toss through the sugar. Leave uncovered at room temperature for 12 hrs or overnight. This process helps the sugar to dissolve, ensures the fruit doesn't disintegrate too much and helps to keep its vibrant colour.



Before starting the jam, put 2 saucers in the freezer. Tip the strawberry mixture into a preserving pan with the lemon juice. Set over a low heat and cook very gently. If any sugar remains on the sides of the pan, dip a pastry brush in hot water and brush the sugar away.



When you can no longer feel any grains of sugar remaining, turn up the heat to start bubbling the jam and bringing it to the boil. (The sugar must be completely dissolved before increasing the heat, otherwise it will be difficult for the jam to set, and it may contain crystallised lumps of sugar.)



Boil hard for 5-10 mins until the jam has reached 105C on a preserving or digital thermometer, then turn off the heat. If you don't have a thermometer, spoon a little jam onto one of the cold saucers. Leave for 30 secs, then push with your finger; if the jam wrinkles and doesn't flood to fill the gap, it is ready. If not, turn the heat back on and boil for 2 mins more, then turn off the heat and do the wrinkle test again. Repeat until ready.



Use a spoon to skim any scum that has risen to the surface and discard this. Do this only once at the end, rather than constantly during the boiling stage, to reduce wastage.



Add a knob of butter, if you like, to the finished jam, and stir in to melt. This will help to dissolve any remaining scum that you haven't managed to spoon off the top. Leave the jam to settle for 15 mins – this will ensure that the fruit stays suspended in the mixture and doesn't all float to the top of the jam jar. Meanwhile, sterilise your jars (see tip, opposite).



Ladle into warm jars, filling to just below the rim. Place a wax disc on top of the jam (this prevents mildew forming), then cover with a lid or a cellophane circle and elastic band. Pop on a label (include the date), plus a pretty fabric top, if you like. *The jam can be stored for up to 1 year in a cool, dry place.* Refrigerate after opening. GF

Ripe & beautiful

Make the most of summer's bounty – from sweet blueberries and cherries to tart gooseberries, they're all just waiting to be transformed into something special.

Recipes SARAH COOK and CASSIE BEST Photographs PHILIP WEBB



Gorgeously gluten free – Cherry blossom cake

Food styling SARAH COOK and CASSIE BEST | Styling LUCY HARVEY

Cherry blossom cake

CUTS INTO 10 SLICES ● PREP 25 MINS ● COOK 1 HR Easy UN-ICED

300g cherries, stoned and roughly chopped
250g polenta
250g pack butter, softened
250g golden caster sugar
4 large eggs
100g ground almonds
2½ tsp baking powder
150ml pot natural yoghurt
1 tsp orange blossom water
Juice of ½ orange
FOR THE SYRUP
Juice of 1 orange
3 tbsp golden caster sugar
½ tsp orange blossom water
FOR THE CHERRY ICING
50g cherries, stoned, plus extra cherries on stalks to serve
175g icing sugar

1 Heat oven to 160C/140C fan. Use a little of the butter to grease a deep 23cm cake tin and line with baking parchment. Mix the cherries and 50g of the polenta, then set aside.
2 In a large bowl, combine the butter and sugar with an electric whisk until pale and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, mixing well between each addition. Add the remaining polenta, the almonds, baking powder, yogurt, orange blossom water, orange juice and cherry mix, and stir everything until just combined. Tip into the tin, smooth the top and bake for 45 mins or until a skewer comes out clean.
3 Meanwhile, make the syrup. Boil the orange juice and sugar for a few mins until the sugar has dissolved. Remove from the heat, add the orange blossom water and let cool. When the cake is done, remove from the oven and pour over the syrup. Leave to cool in the tin for 20 mins, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.
4 To make the cherry icing, put the cherries and icing sugar in a small food processor and blend until smooth. Drizzle all over the cake, then top with whole cherries. Will keep for up to 5 days in a cake tin.

PER SLICE 591 kcals, protein 8g, carbs 74g, fat 29g, sat fat 14g, fibre 1g, sugar 55g, salt 0.9g



Blueberry swirl cheesecake

CUTS INTO 14 BARS ● PREP 35 MINS PLUS COOLING AND CHILLING ● COOK 45 MINS Easy

300g digestive biscuits
140g butter, melted
275g golden caster sugar
100g blueberries
1 tsp cornflour
3 x 300g packs full-fat cream cheese
4 tbsp plain flour
2 tsp vanilla extract
3 large eggs
200ml pot soured cream

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Line a 20 x 30cm rectangular tin with baking parchment. Put the biscuits in a food processor and blitz to a fine crumb. Add the butter and blitz again to combine. Tip into the tin, press down firmly with the back of a spoon to cover the base, then bake for 10 mins. Leave to cool.
2 Meanwhile, tip 25g of the sugar and the blueberries into a small pan. Mix the cornflour with 1 tbsp cold water and add this to the pan. Heat gently until the sugar dissolves. Increase the heat and bubble for 1-2 mins until saucy. Set aside to cool.
3 In a large bowl, whisk the cream cheese with an electric hand-held whisk until smooth. Add the remaining sugar and whisk again. Add the flour, vanilla, eggs and soured cream, and whisk until smooth and well combined.
4 Pour half the cheesecake mixture over the biscuit base, then spoon half the blueberry sauce on top in small blobs. Cover with the remaining cheesecake mix and smooth the surface with a spatula. Drizzle the remaining blueberry sauce over the top, then use the end of the spoon to ripple it into the cheesecake. Bake for 10 mins, then lower the heat to 110C/90C fan and bake for a further 30 mins. Turn off the oven and leave the cheesecake inside for 1 hr, then leave for 1 hr more with the door ajar. Finally, leave at room temperature until completely cool, then chill for at least 3 hrs or, even better, overnight. Slice into 14 bars. *Will keep in the fridge for up to 5 days.*

PER BAR 606 kcals, protein 6g, carbs 39g, fat 47g, sat fat 28g, fibre none, sugar 24g, salt 1.0g >>

Berry, rose water, almond & meringue tart

SERVES 12 ● PREP 20-40 MINS ● COOK 5-25 MINS (DEPENDING ON WHETHER YOU BAKE YOUR OWN PASTRY) Easy

A showstopper pud with a secret layer of chewy marzipan baked into the base.

500g pack marzipan
1 x 23cm round tart case – ready-made or bake your own with bought shortcrust pastry
600ml pot double cream
2 tbsp icing sugar
2 tsp rose water
5 small meringue nests, crushed
600g mixed berries (we used raspberries, blackberries, blueberries and cherries)
50g toasted flaked almonds

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Roll out the marzipan to a circle roughly 21cm in diameter – use a plate as a template to cut around. Lay the marzipan circle in the centre of the tart case, then put in the oven and bake for 5 mins. Remove from the oven and leave to cool completely.

2 Tip the double cream, icing sugar and rose water into a bowl. Whisk until the cream just holds its shape, then stir through the crushed meringue. Drop some of the berries into the bottom of the tart case. Pile over the cream mixture, then top with the remaining berries and flaked almonds. Serve straight away.

PER SERVING 672 kcals, protein 8g, carbs 52g, fat 48g, sat fat 24g, fibre 2g, sugar 40g, salt 0.3g



Impressive but so simple

Blueberry & pretzel cookies

MAKES 20 ● PREP 20 MINS ● COOK 18 MINS Easy ❄ UNCOOKED

Chewy, crunchy, salty and sweet – these cookies have it all!

175g butter, softened
200g light soft brown sugar
100g golden caster sugar
1 tbsp vanilla extract
1 large egg
250g plain flour
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
200g blueberries
50g small salted pretzels, broken into chunky pieces
100g white chocolate chunks

1 Heat oven to 190C/170C fan. Line 2 baking trays with baking parchment. Tip the butter, sugars and vanilla into a bowl. Beat with a hand-held electric whisk until pale and fluffy. Add the egg and beat again. Tip the flour, bicarb and a pinch of salt into the bowl, and use a spatula to mix together. Add the blueberries, pretzel pieces and chocolate chunks, and mix again until everything is combined.

2 Scoop golf-ball-sized mounds of cookie dough onto the baking trays, making sure you leave plenty of space between each one. (You should fit 4-6 cookies on each tray, so you'll have to bake in batches to make the total 20 cookies.) *Can be frozen at this point – simply defrost in the fridge before baking.* Bake for 18 mins, swapping the trays around halfway through.

3 Remove the trays from the oven and leave to cool for 10 mins before transferring to a wire rack, then bake the second batch. Continue until all the cookies are baked. *Will keep in a cookie jar for up to 1 week.*

PER COOKIE 211 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 29g, fat 9g, sat fat 6g, fibre 1g, sugar 19g, salt 0.3g

Blueberry milkshakes

MAKES 2 ● PREP 5 MINS ● NO COOK

Easy

This is a great way to use up any soft blueberries that are a bit past their best. In a blender, whizz **100g blueberries**, **2 tbsp maple syrup** or **honey**, **2 tsp vanilla extract**, **200ml milk** and **2 large scoops vanilla ice cream**. Pour into milkshake glasses and enjoy with a straw.

PER SHAKE 245 kcals, protein 6g, carbs 35g, fat 8g, sat fat 5g, fibre 1g, sugar 32g, salt 0.2g GF



Stay cool

Making your own ice cream is easier than you think. Stash these delicious chilled ideas in the freezer, ready to serve whenever the cravings kick in!



Raspberry coconut ices

MAKES 8 ● PREP 20 MINS PLUS FREEZING ● NO COOK Easy

150g raspberries
4 tbsp icing sugar
225g Greek-style coconut yoghurt

1 Purée the raspberries in a food processor along with the icing sugar. Sieve to remove the seeds.
2 Spoon the yoghurt into a bowl and stir in 2 tbsp of purée so it is stained pink.
3 Spoon into lolly moulds, add the rest of the purée then the rest of the yoghurt. Push in lolly sticks and freeze until solid.

PER SERVING 119 kcals, protein 3g, carbs 16g, fat 6g, sat fat 4g, fibre 1g, sugar 15g, salt 0.1g



Gooseberry & elderflower yoghurt ice

MAKES ABOUT 1 LITRE ● PREP 10 MINS PLUS FREEZING ● COOK 5 MINS

Easy ❄ Low fat

400g gooseberries
200g golden caster sugar
3 tbsp elderflower cordial
500ml Greek yoghurt
150ml whole milk

1 Tip the gooseberries and sugar into a pan with 2 tbsp water. Heat gently to dissolve the sugar. Increase the heat and simmer for a few mins to soften the berries.
2 Remove from the heat, carefully tip into a food processor and whizz to a purée. Add the elderflower cordial and whizz again. Taste to check that the purée is sweet enough and has enough elderflower flavour – remember that the flavour will be diluted by the yoghurt, so it needs to be quite sweet. If not, add a sprinkle more sugar or a splash more cordial and whizz again. Mix the yoghurt and milk until smooth, then add the purée and mix again.
3 Pour the mixture into an ice-cream machine. Churn until frozen – about 2 hrs.
4 Pour the frozen yoghurt into a container and freeze for at least 3 hrs. *Will keep in the freezer for up to 2 months.*

PER SERVING 115 kcals, protein 2g, carbs 18g, fat 4g, sat fat 2g, fibre 1g, sugar 18g, salt 0.1g



Iced raspberry cranachan

SERVES 12 ● PREP 35 MINS PLUS OVERNIGHT FREEZING ● COOK 15 MINS Easy ❄

50g pinhead oatmeal
25g soft brown sugar
350g raspberries
3 large eggs
100ml clear honey
300ml pot double cream

1 Spread the oatmeal and sugar evenly over a tray lined with foil. Toast under a medium grill for 10-15 mins, until browned and caramelised – stir regularly to prevent the mix from burning. Leave to cool on the tray before peeling from the parchment. Break into small chunks and set aside. Grease and line a 900g loaf with cling film, making sure that it does not tear.
2 Push the raspberries through a sieve into a bowl to remove any seeds and create a purée. Set aside. Whisk the eggs and honey in a large bowl over a pan of barely simmering water until pale, thick and roughly doubled in volume, then remove from the heat.
3 Whip the cream in a separate bowl until it is thick and just stands in soft peaks. Fold the egg mixture into the cream, followed by the oatmeal chunks. Carefully stir through the raspberry purée in a zig-zag so that you get a rippled effect. Pour the mix into the prepared tin, cover with more cling film and put in the freezer for 10-12 hrs (or overnight) until set.
4 To serve, remove from the freezer, unwrap the top layer of cling film and turn onto your serving plate. Tease out the iced mixture using the cling film. Cut into slices and serve immediately. Sprinkle with whole raspberries and make extra purée to serve alongside, if you like.

PER SERVING 198 kcals, protein 3g, carbs 12g, fat 15g, sat fat 9g, fibre 1g, sugar 10g, salt 0.1g GF

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Safety first!

With the rising summer temperatures, keeping food safe from spoiling becomes that much more of a challenge. Nicola Monteath asks the experts to share their advice on how to make food safety a priority at home.

While restaurants operate under strict food safety regulations, food at home can often fail to live up to the safety standards that are required – particularly in the unforgiving summer scenario. Even though we want to feed ourselves and our families the best, sometimes it can be easy to forget or simply not know where exactly we are going wrong. Many times, we play the blame game on restaurants or supermarkets, but rarely think back to whether the food was kept safe once in our hands.

The Food Control Department at Dubai Municipality revealed at the Arab Health Congress, that the number of food-borne illnesses reported in 2013 totaled up to 1,123. This is purely due to lack of good practices and awareness on food safety habits at home. Here, Registered Dietitian at Safe Food, Safe Family (a food safety campaign in Kuwait), Dana Ghareeb, and Principal Food Studies and Surveys officer of the Food Control Department at Dubai Municipality, Bobby Krishna T M, share essential food safety tips you need to follow to protect your family's health.



When shopping

"The biggest food safety violations happen from the moment people step into the grocery store. The most important aspect when it comes to grocery shopping is to ensure that shoppers follow a particular order when buying their groceries," says Dana.

If you have to buy canned, packaged foods and household items, do this first, as they aren't at risk of getting spoilt. Fruits and vegetables, fresh and frozen meat, poultry and seafood should be placed in the cart towards the end of your shopping. "Dairy and fresh fruit and vegetables need to be refrigerated, so shoppers must ensure that these items aren't left exposed at room temperature for more than one hour while walking around purchasing groceries," says Dana.

In the cart, make sure to avoid keeping frozen meat next to the vegetables, as the meat juices could leak onto the other foods and cause food contamination. Bobby suggests buying meat last, so that you can hold it in your hands and head straight to the checkout counter. Ensure all frozen items aren't exposed at room temperature for more than two hours after grocery shopping, as bacteria multiplies rapidly. Also, always keep perishable food items inside your car, instead of the boot, as it is cooler.

When prepping and cooking

The main rules to follow are categorised under cooking, cleaning, storing and separating. Before you begin preparing your dish, make sure to wash your hands. "Always wash for at least 20 seconds before and after handling any food," says Dana. Utensils and surfaces should be kept clean at all times. Wipe it with hot, soapy water and remember to soak sponges and dishcloths in clean water for half an hour every day. Discard any cloths that have a bad odour.

COOKING: Food items must be cooked to their correct temperature, and this is why every kitchen should be equipped with a thermometer to get accurate results. When checking poultry, insert the thermometer to the thickest part of the chicken piece – it should be cooked to 74C. Whole cuts of meat and fish should have a temperature of 63C, while leftovers should be cooked to 74C. Always insert the thermometer to the most centralised part of the dish. Serve cooked food hot, and check the temperature frequently to make sure it doesn't drop below 60C. Bacteria that causes food poisoning multiplies fastest between 5C to 60C.

CLEANING: Before using fruits and vegetables in dishes, wash them in cold water – even those that have a peel, as bacteria sometimes transfer from the outside layer of the skin to the flesh inside.



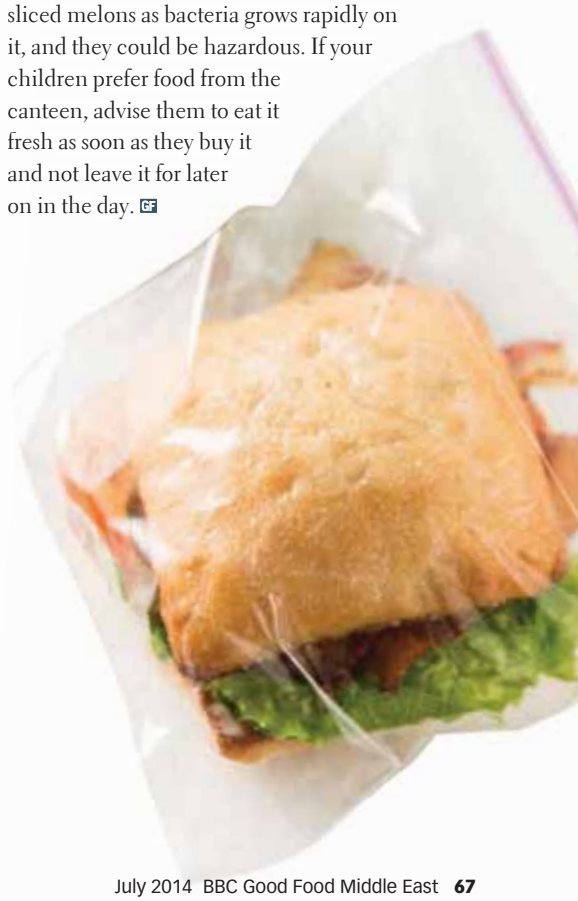
STORING: Meats and any frozen items should be kept in a freezer set to -18C, while the refrigerator should be set at 5C. It's best to shop for groceries on a weekly basis, so that you get through all the items in the fridge, and throw away anything that looks spoilt or smells odd. Avoid defrosting food in a microwave or under running water, as food should not be frozen again when microwaved or kept at room temperature for long; Dana reccomends thawing food in the refrigerator, as it isn't risky to re-freeze in this case.

"Another common mistake a lot of people tend to make is storing eggs on the door of the refrigerator and not on the inside shelves. The constant opening and closing of the fridge door causes the temperature to fluctuate which in turn affects the freshness of the eggs," says Dana.

SEPARATING: It's easy to forget about separating items in the fridge, or when chopping and preparing a dish, but it is vital to remember to do so to prevent contamination. Raw meat, poultry and seafood should be kept in sealed containers or plastic bags, in the freezer. Use different chopping boards or mats for vegetables, poultry, fish and seafood.

When carrying food

Whether you're packing lunch for the kids or an office meal for yourself, pack it right, so that the food is safe to eat at lunchtime. Lunchboxes are exposed to various foods and become a breeding ground for bacteria. Always soak it in detergent for at least half an hour before washing thoroughly. Before adding food to the box, wrap the insides with cling film or a paper towel that can be disposed. Hot soups can be packed in a thermos to retains heat. Cold fruit and vegetables, milk, cheese and yoghurt, should be stored in an air-tight container with an ice pack. Dana recommends carrying weekday lunches in an insulated box to keep food safe and at the right temperature at all times. She also recommends packing foods like granola bars, whole raw fruits and nuts, as they keep for longer. "Pack sliced or whole fruits like oranges, apples and bananas as they are not risky options," says Bobby. But, avoid sliced melons as bacteria grows rapidly on it, and they could be hazardous. If your children prefer food from the canteen, advise them to eat it fresh as soon as they buy it and not leave it for later on in the day. GF





Dalia designed her kitchen exactly as she wanted it

MY KITCHEN

Dalia Dogmoch Soubra

Cookbook author Dalia Dogmoch Soubra shows Nicola Monteath around her beautiful custom-made kitchen where she tries and tests her recipes.

Photographs ANAS CHERUR

Dalia Dogmoch Soubra, author of Food, Love & Life from Dalia's Kitchen (CPI Media Group) and founder of Kitsch Bakery and Café and food blog daliaskitchen.com, is a bit of a nomad. She was born in London, grew up in Paris, spent a fair amount of time in New York, and is of Syrian heritage. Dalia loves cooking and shares her eclectic mix of everything from French and Arabic to international recipes. Here she shows us the heart of her home in Jumeirah Islands, which she moved into in 2010, where she lives with her husband and two children Phares, 2 ½, and Joanna, 1 year old. She not only uses this kitchen for cooking, but also entertaining and spending time with her kids.

What did the kitchen look like when you moved in?

Nothing like this! It was a closed kitchen and there was a little natural light but the space still felt dark. The cupboards were off-white and the flooring was made up of light coloured tiles. The reason we moved to this house was because we needed more space, as our family was growing.

Where did you start?

To be honest, to own the kitchen of my dreams I need to have about eight houses! I cook a lot and didn't want to be locked away in a closed kitchen, so the first thing I wanted to do was break down the walls. This kitchen is a mix of both modern and rustic elements, as I love to mix and match. My custom-made kitchen is from Beirut – we got it shipped in. I basically gave them the design I wanted and they made the piece and fitted it accordingly.

What was your thought process behind designing this?

I chose a custom made kitchen because I knew exactly what I needed in my cooking space. I wanted to make sure this kitchen was not only beautiful but practical as well. I went with a white and grey colour scheme as white gives a more clean and pure feeling, while the grey countertop works as a nice contrast. I also desired something quite simple so that the food, and all my bits and pieces in the kitchen would stand out – it's almost like a blank canvas.

How did you plan your space?

It's an open kitchen so I made sure it was planned in a way where I could entertain while cooking and chopping. This is why the chopping board area is right beside the stove. I also have bar stools on the other side of the counter (near the dining table) so friends can sit and chat while I prepare.

So, what was the most important thing for you when designing your kitchen?

It's the heart of the house, and my son who is now two and a half is used to being around the kitchen all the time. We broke down the dining room walls as well – that were in front of the kitchen – to make it a big open space. I needed more natural light in the kitchen, so I increased the size of the windows. I made sure the dining table was placed right in front of the kitchen, as I like to chat while cooking.

I love that dining table! Could you tell me more about it?

The table is from Marina Homes Furniture. It's funny, I actually bought the table before we even


Pots and pans are on display to create a homely, lived-in feel



Some of her favourite family photos are framed on the wall nearby


A large refrigerator is one of her must-haves


Dalia loves entertaining in her open-plan kitchen

finished doing the house. I decided to mix and match the chairs to add colour. We initially started off with two chairs, and now we have 12! I dressed each chair with fabrics from Missoni and Kenzo. I also have two metal chairs from Crate and Barrel that I love the most, that I use as head chairs.

Did you have any preference in appliances?
I knew I needed a large refrigerator, so I opted for Frigidaire as the size is good. I still need more fridge space though! I had my Rosieres stove shipped in from Lebanon as well. I love the way it looks and feels, and that it is a gas stove. Honestly, I'd rather have a tiny kitchen with a gas stove, than a big kitchen with an electric stove.

What cookware do you like to use?
I am obsessed with Mauviel! I never shine or polish my pots and pans as I like the way it looks, and I hang them up on the wall. You can really notice the difference in taste when you cook with these.

Your favourite part of the kitchen?
I love the whole kitchen, but the photo-wall next to the dining table is probably one of my favourite things to look at, while I'm busy in the kitchen. GF

DALIA'S KITCHEN PLANNING TIPS

- Go through your cooking routine from prep to finish when you design your space. You want to make sure that your kitchen is functional and adapted to the way you live.
- Don't hide your utensils – showcase what you have! It makes the kitchen come alive.
- Make sure that the material you use for your countertop is adapted to your cooking style. For example, I was recommended some countertops which would have been an absolute nightmare to clean – there's no point in installing a gorgeous countertop that stains or absorbs food liquids quickly, it won't look pretty for long!

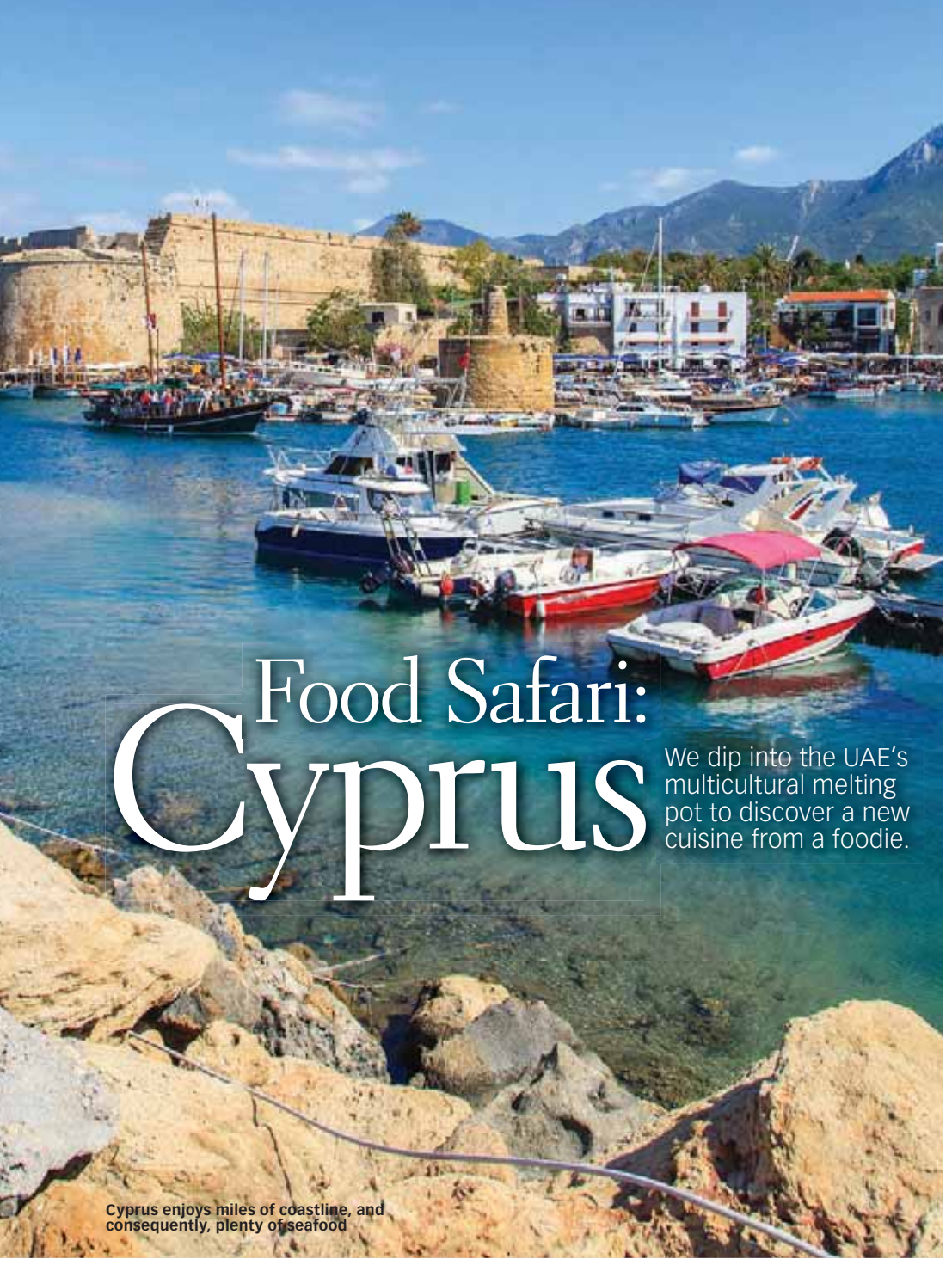
GET THE LOOK



Get inspired by Dalia and light up a candle like this Penhaligons candles in aromas such as Early Grey, to banish strong scents – essential for an open kitchen. Dhs525 at Bloomingdale's Home-Dubai.


Dalia loves Mauviel pans – this Mauviel 12cm pan make a great accessory as well. Dhs230 at Tavola


Keep these sugar and tea Storage jars on the kitchen counter. Dhs195 at bitsandpieces.ae.



Food Safari: Cyprus

We dip into the UAE's multicultural melting pot to discover a new cuisine from a foodie.

Cyprus enjoys miles of coastline, and consequently, plenty of seafood

When it comes to food, any country with a claim to the Mediterranean has a distinct advantage – after all, the bountiful land of fruits, vegetables, seafood and olive oil, and sunshine, simply lends itself to fresh, delicious dining, even at the most basic and rustic of levels. Cyprus is no different. As Anthie Petrou, distributor of Thermomix (a multi-functional kitchen appliance that is a favourite of chefs all over the world) in the Middle East, and resident of Dubai for 20 years puts it, "Cypriots love food and that explains the variety of dishes available. The favourable climate allows the production of natural ingredients – a great variety of vegetables and fruits, olives, olive oil, grapes, wines, and herbs, which are used in the everyday cooking."

Born and bred in a small town in Paphos (one of the country's six regions, situated in western Cyprus), Anthie has always loved cooking and good food, and started cooking when she was just 12. "I grew up in a house where the whole family would sit around the table every day for not only lunch and dinner but most of the times for breakfast as well. We learned to respect and appreciate good food from a very young age," she says.

With Greek and Middle Eastern influences, thanks to its nearest neighbours, food in Cyprus is an intrinsic part of the culture and traditions, with every social celebration revolving around eating and drinking.

THE COUNTRY

Located in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Republic of Cyprus has probably gained infamy for the tussle for its ownership between the Greeks and the Turks. But it has a far older and richer history – with its earliest inhabitation dating back to 10,000 BC. Since then, it has been part of a Greek settlement, Egyptian rule, Persian rule, and eventually the Roman or Byzantine empire. In the 16th century, it was conquered by the Ottoman empire, and in more recent times, it was placed under British administration until gaining independence in 1960. Clearly a sought after piece of land, primarily because of its strategic location on a trade route and abundant agriculture, the island nation now enjoys an uneasy peace based on a ceasefire agreed on between Turkey and Greece in 1974 – when Turkish troops tried to take over control of the island following communal violence between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots – which has led to the country being divided in two; the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is, however, recognised only by their Northern neighbour, Turkey. While Cyprus was accepted as part of the EU in 2004, this region, accounting for about a third of the land mass, does not come under EU legislation. This ongoing undercurrent of discord is a cause for concerns among most Cypriots, and colours the politics of the country till today. "The Turkish invasion caused upset among a lot of Cypriots, and that part of the country is different now," rues Anthie.

Politics aside, what the entire nation has in common is the beautiful coastline, overlooked by two inland mountain ranges, the Troodos Mountains and the Kyrenia Range, with the Mesaoria plains stretching in between them. Enjoying the typical Mediterranean climate of long, hot summers and mild winters (no wonder everyone was fighting over it!), and with lush vegetation throughout the landscape, Cyprus boasts the production of a variety of fruits and vegetables – mostly during the summer, although each of the four seasons has its distinctive produce and vegetation. "These are typically incorporated in the everyday diet in the form of cooked or raw fruit and vegetables," Anthie explains.

The island's closest neighbours, apart from Turkey in the north, include Syria and Lebanon in the east, Israel, Egypt and of course, Greece, which has had the most enduring influence on the local culture – the closest Greek island is a mere 300 odd kilometres away.

THE CUISINE

Naturally, this means that the Greek influence on the cuisine has been the strongest. Nonetheless, Anthie is quick to explain that, Cypriot food still has its own unique qualities. "For example, we use a lot of coriander and cumin in our food, which Greeks don't use," she says. "Everyone passed through Cyprus, and they all left something behind."

According to Anthie, "Cypriot cuisine is based on the Mediterranean diet. Olive oil is widely used in our cooking as well as combinations of herbs and spices. Cypriot dishes are well-spiced with herbs and spices but aren't usually spicy or hot."

Vegetables like zucchini, aubergine, tomatoes and cucumber are widely used, as are herbs such as mint, parsley and oregano. Meat – pork and lamb are popular – and pulses also feature in the cuisine, as does lots of seafood, naturally, being an island. Cheeses also feature heavily in the cuisine, with halloumi, feta, being extensively used, as well as kefalotiri, a hard, yellow cheese, and Anari cheese (a soft, fresh whey cheese) which are both unique to Cyprus. Other essentials in the cuisine include potatoes, wild greens, capers, nuts and herbs, carobs, citrus fruits like lemons, oranges, mandarins, grapes, and of course, olives – both in fruit form, as well as the oil, without which, no Mediterranean meal is complete.

Some traditional Cypriot dishes (the Greek and Turkish influences are evident in this list) include Souvla (skewered, charcoal-grilled meat or chicken); Pastitsio (Baked pasta with a mincemeat and béchamel sauce); Squid cooked in tomato and wine sauce; Stuffed vegetables with rice and mince meat; Koupepia (Stuffed grapevine leaves); Horiatiki salad (Village salad made with tomato, cucumber, green peppers, olives and feta cheese sprinkled with dried mint); Afelia (cubed meat cooked in wine and dried coriander sauce); Sheftalia (grilled Cypriot sausage made of pork, lamb, onions & parsley); Keftedes (deep fried meat balls); Daktila (a long finger-shaped filo pastry filled with almond, sugar and cinnamon, deep fried and dipped in syrup); and Pourekia (filo pastry dough stuffed with anari cheese, sugar and cinnamon).



Anthie's childhood memories are filled with family get-togethers around food

She goes back to Cyprus every year and recreates the laid-back pace of life in her summer home

Anthie cooks Cypriot cuisine for her family a few times a week

Just the names and descriptions of these dishes are evocative of the long, lazy, mezze meals typical of the Levant region! According to Anthie, "The 'Meze' assortment of 20-30 dishes, starting from appetisers, salads and vegetables, followed by fish and meat dishes and finishing with sweets and fruits, is offered in taverns all over the island."

With four clear seasons on the island, the traditional diet incorporates salads, fresh fruits and cheeses, and cooked vegetables in many forms – boiled courgettes served with olive oil and lemon, aubergines cooked in tomato sauce, stuffed vegetables with rice and meat mince, for example – in the summer. Typical winter meals could include a lot of soup – trahanas, a traditional soup made from sour milk and crushed wheat come to Anthie's mind, as does avgolemono, a soup made with rice, egg and lemon, and kolokasi, a winter vegetable cooked with tomato sauce and meat or chicken.

Being quite a small country, there aren't too many regional variations in the cuisine, and if any, they are mainly seen in the preparation of traditional food and delicacies for special occasions, rather than in everyday cooking. "For example, you can find Paskies, a traditional meat and cheese pie made during Easter only in the Paphos area" Anthie explains.

THE CULTURE

While gathering around the family table for a meal over the weekend is an integral part of the Cypriot culture, special occasions such as Easter and Christmas warrant even more occasions to do so, naturally. "Our regular diet is definitely affected by religious festivals, with fasting periods forty days before Christmas and fifty days before >>

Text & styling SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs ANAS CHERUR, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Easter; during fasting, we prepare special food which is meat- and dairy- free," Anthie says, adding that Easter is the most important festival in Cyprus.

As is wont to happen, several quirky traditions surrounding food and festivals have endured through the ages. One that comes to Anthie's mind involves tossing doughnuts on the roof during Christmas (which is celebrated on January 6 – part of the Greek Orthodox church's tradition)! "We have a folklore that naughty fairy creatures are supposed to come out from under the ground on New Year's Day, and create mischief. So, the Cypriot tradition is to make Loqumades (mini fried doughnuts) and throw them on the roof for them to eat, be appeased, and go back to where they came from," she tells us with a giggle. "We still make Loqumades at this time every year, although we don't throw them on the roof anymore!"

Special celebrations aside, Cypriots clearly love food, and turn any occasion into a feast. As Anthie puts it, "Food, a lot of times, is the excuse to get together with friends and family. It is not uncommon for big groups of people to meet for lunch or dinner in the weekends. Cypriots enjoy nothing more than feeding family and guests offering a wide variety and great quantities of good food."

Growing up in a small, community-centric town, with the extended family living all around, her favourite childhood memories are of the family getting together every weekend, with lots of food on the table for everyone to share. "It was usually meat, put into an outdoor oven to cook in the morning, and taken out at lunchtime, with salads, cheeses, breads, and pasta," she reminisces.

Luckily for her, while her life and times have changed, she gets to recreate these food-filled moments every summer when they go back home for the holidays, where breakfast, lunch and dinner are all enjoyed on the verandah, and there is a constant stream of people coming and going.

What might have changed slightly is that she now prioritises cooking healthy too, but she continues to celebrate good food through her family life and career till today, saying, "Through Thermomix I'm always around good, healthy food and people with similar interests. I am not only continuously learning from the numerous chefs, nutritionists and food specialists I come across, but I also love to share my knowledge for good food."

Here she shares her knowledge of traditional Cypriot recipes that she has given a slightly healthy twist.



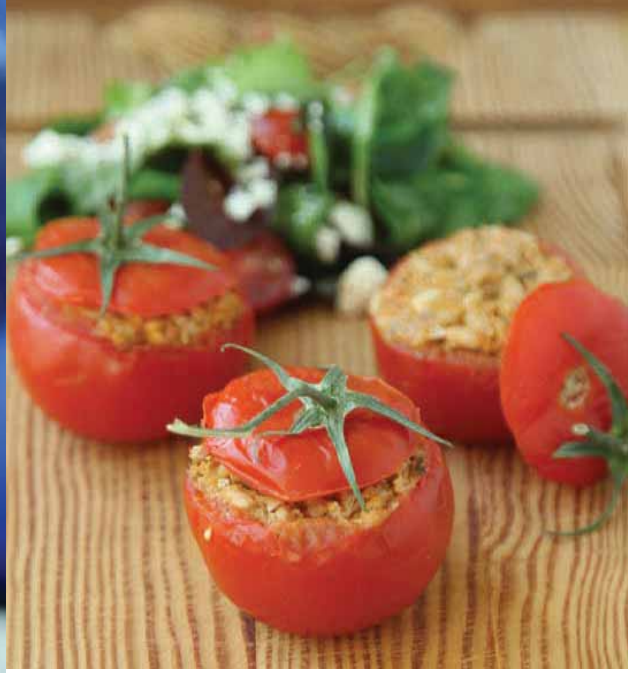
TRY THESE

Squid cooked in tomato and wine sauce

SERVES 4 ● PREP 10MINS ● COOK 40MINS Easy

1 kg squid, cut in 1 cm rounds (you can also include heads and tentacles)
1 big onion
2 cloves garlic
50ml olive oil
200ml tomato juice
100g red wine
1 vegetable stock cube
2 bay leaves (dried)
Salt and pepper, to taste
A splash of tabasco sauce
1 tbsp flour
Fresh coriander leaves, for garnish (optional)

1 Dice onion and garlic and sauté with olive oil for a few minutes until onions become soft and translucent.
2 Add the squid, tomato juice, vegetable stock, wine, bay leaves, tabasco sauce, salt and pepper and cook for 30-40 mins stirring occasionally until squid is soft and the liquid is reduced.
3 Dissolve the flour in ¼ cup of cold water and add slowly into the stew, stirring constantly. Cook until the sauce thickens.
4 Serve warm with steamed brown rice, garnished with fresh coriander leaves.



Stuffed capsicum with mushrooms and nuts

SERVES 4 ● PREP 35 MINS ● COOK 25 MINS
A little effort V

10-12 medium sized tomatoes
1 big onion
1-2 clove garlic
50ml olive oil
100ml tomato juice
2 vegetable stock cubes
Salt and pepper, to taste
2 tsp sugar
80g walnuts
80g almonds
200g mushrooms
160g risotto rice
1 tbsp dry mint

1 Wash the tomatoes and cut out the tops, ready for filling. Scoop out the flesh and seeds and process in a food processor to get a thick sauce. Reserve to use later.
2 Dice the onion and garlic and sauté with olive oil for a few minutes until onions become soft and translucent.
3 Add the tomato juice, 1 vegetable stock, sugar, salt and pepper into the onions and cook for 10 mins staring occasionally.
4 Add the rice, the coarsely cut nuts (walnuts and almonds), the sliced mushrooms and the mint in the sauce and cook for 10 mins.
5 Use the mixture to stuff the tomatoes and place them in a baking dish. Dissolve the second vegetable stock in 200ml of hot water, add a drop of olive oil and pour in the baking dish with the stuffed tomatoes. Bake in the oven until rice is done. Bake in a covered baking dish in a preheated oven at 180C for 20 mins.



Halva with berry coulis

SERVES 6 ● PREP 10 MINS ● COOK 10 MINS Easy
Traditional Halva with semolina is usually cooked with a lot of oil, this is a lighter variation of the traditional recipe.

150g blanched almonds
250g semolina
Crushed mastic (optional)
50g rose water
FOR THE SYRUP
1l water
250g sugar
2 cinnamon sticks
3-4 cloves
Fresh fruits, for garnish (optional)
FOR THE BERRY COULIS
200g mixed fresh berries
75g sugar (adjust according to taste, and sweetness of the fruits)
Juice of half a lemon

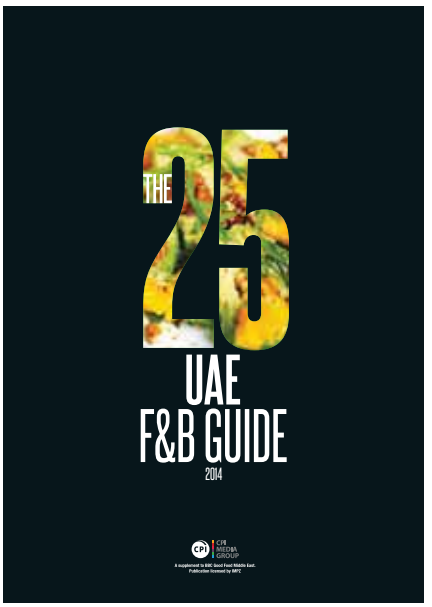
1 Make the syrup by placing all the ingredients in a pot and simmer for 10 mins.
2 Coarsely grind the almonds in a food processor and keep aside.
3 Remove the cinnamon and cloves from the syrup, add semolina and mastic, if using, and cook for 2-3 mins, stirring constantly until the mixture thickens. Add the ground almonds and rose water and continue stirring on low heat for another min.
4 Splash a baking mould or ramekin with the rose water, and pour the mixture into it, refrigerate.
5 To make the coulis, combine all the ingredients with 100ml water in a small pan. Bring to the boil and simmer for 5 mins until the fruit is soft. Transfer into a food processor and whizz to a purée, then strain through a sieve.
6 Unmould the Halva, drizzle over the coulis and garnish with chopped fresh fruits if you like. GF

TIP Whip some fresh cream to soft peaks consistency and add it to the Halva mixture after step 3, and after the mixture cools a bit – this will give you a creamier pudding.

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HOT new RESTAURANT

WHERE Vi Cool, Aguas de Ibiza Lifestyle & Spa, in Ibiza's Santa Eulària des Riu town
WHO Michelin star chef Sergi Arola
WHAT Sophisticated tapas, with innovative twists to the traditional, celebrating Mediterranean flavours – think deep fried prawns served with mint and marinated sardines in tomato oil – washed down with creative cocktails
THE SETTING Chilled out designer luxe on the rooftop
FIND OUT MORE designhotels.com/hotels/spain/ibiza/santa-eulalia-del-rio/aguas-de-ibiza



Deliciousness down under!

The brand new One & Only Hayman island, previously known as Hayman island resort, which opens this month, will bring a new level of luxury to the stunning Great Barrier Reef region of Australia, as well as exciting gastronomic adventures. Set on its own private island, the resort is home to seven culinary experiences, including signature restaurant Fire, which offers Australian cuisine highlighting fresh, local produce, and a focus on grills. Other offerings include Asian restaurant Bamboo and Amici, for Italian, but what we're most excited about are the bespoke experiences such as private dining in cabanas set within tropical gardens, gourmet beach picnics, and the Reef Chef's table, where you get to enjoy a degustation of the chefs' finest creations at various breathtaking locations around the island. We think this is enough reason to get on a plane for, but if you needed any further excuse, the UNESCO world heritage site that it is located within offering marvellous snorkelling opportunities, and gorgeous coral seas make up the perfect beach holiday formula. Room rates start from AUD730 per night (around Dhs2.500), visit oneandonlyresorts.com.

Savour Switzerland

Gstaad becomes an epicurean epicentre this month with the Davidoff Saveurs Gstaad Food Festival (July 4-13). Chefs from all over the world descend on this A-list alpine destination with various events taking place at hotels around town, with the grand finale taking place at Alpina Gstaad. Here, Michelin star executive chef Marcus Linder will, in conjunction with Gault-Millau-awarded chef Tanja Grandits from Restaurant Stucki in Basel, serve up a gourmet eight-course dinner at Sommet restaurant on July 13. Find out more from www.thealpinagstaad.ch.

BANGKOK is the world's foodiest city, according to the Tastiest Fast Feasts Awards by British culinary website Chowzter. It beat off competition from Lima, London and Singapore, for its fresh, flavourful offerings.

Four seasons for foodies

Wondering where to head to these Eid holidays? Why not head to a Four Seasons hotel, to discover their newly launched Local Flavours initiative? Designed to give guests a taste of an experience originating from within a 100-mile radius of their location, the culinary experiences can range from a tour of an Organic Farm at the Four Seasons Resort Nevis, West Indies, where you can pick and sample fresh fruits; and a tour of the Santa Fe Farmers Market at the Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado Santa Fe with Chef Andrew Cooper, to shop for ingredients you get to cook yourself later; to an Afternoon Tea at Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire featuring estate-grown produce and honey. Travelling for food just got a whole lot more interesting! More info on taste.fourseasons.com.



Text SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED



The peaceful lakefront setting creates an environment of wellness

THOUGHT *for* FOOD

Sudeshna Ghosh comes back from an eye-opening experience at the Viva Mayr clinic in Austria armed with a changed approach to eating, a wealth of knowledge on diet and nutrition – and a bag full of dresses one size too big!

From a culinary point of view, Austria is known for the Sacher torte (a sinful chocolate cake), coffee laden with mountains of whipped cream, and the deep fried national dish, Wiener Schnitzel. Not quite the epicentre of healthy eating, right? Wrong!

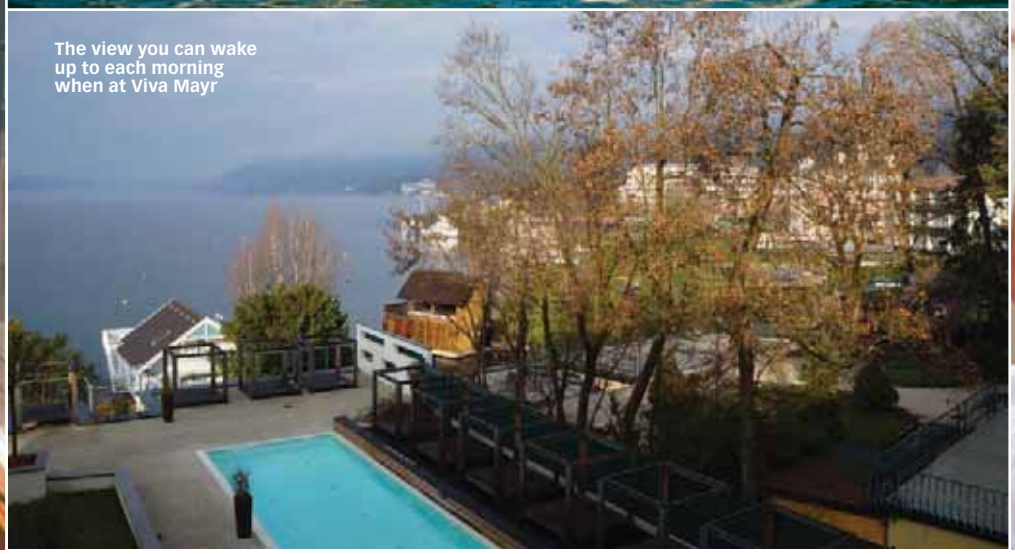
Austria is also home to the Viva Mayr clinic, one of the world's best known destinations for a detox spa break. Except, it's nothing like a spa break, in the traditional sense of the word. Developed by Austrian physican F X Mayr in the early 1940s, Mayr therapy is founded on the principle that a healthy digestive system is at the root of good health, and consequently, also related to most common ailments. Modern Mayr medicine is an evolved version of this, combining various natural therapy systems, to focus on good health from within. And doctors Harold and Christine Stossier, founders of the Viva clinic, can be credited with flying the Mayr medicine flag high not just in Austria – where there are other

Photographs SUPPLIED and by SUDESHNA GHOSH

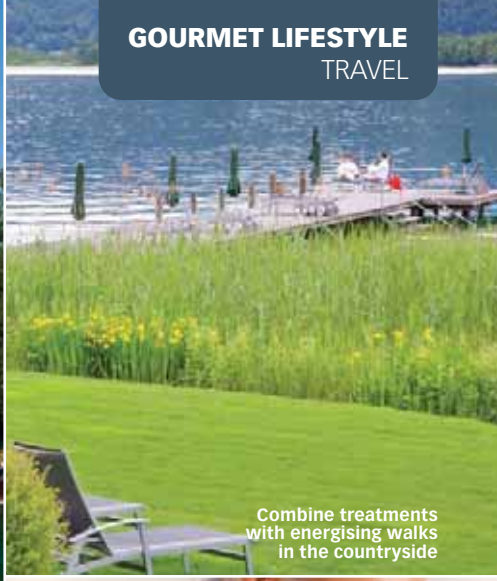




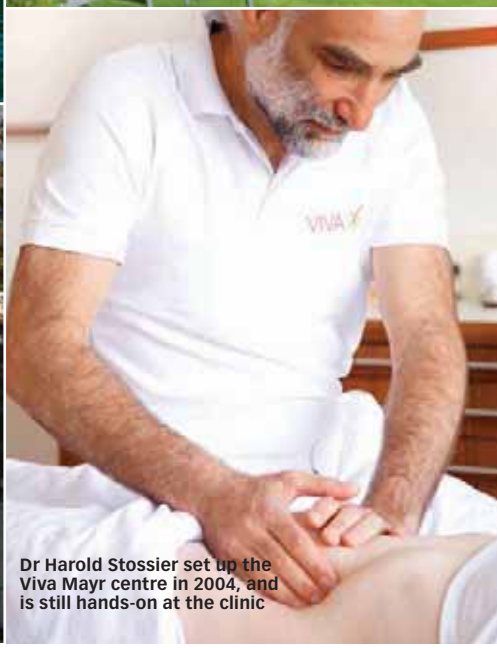
Days can be filled with outdoor activities during summertime



The view you can wake up to each morning when at Viva Mayr



Combine treatments with energising walks in the countryside



Dr Harold Stossier set up the Viva Mayr centre in 2004, and is still hands-on at the clinic

clinics practicing it as well – but elsewhere around the world too. Thanks to them, going for a Viva Mayr detox by the picturesque Lake Worth is fashionable amongst many a celebrity and the well-heeled elite.

But once you get there, the clinic is very equalising – whether you're a Bollywood star, wealthy businessman, or geriatric retiree, here, everyone pads around in bathrobes most of the time, travelling from appointment to appointment, and swapping stories in the lounge as they catch up on their emails over a cup of herbal tea.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

Nestled in a picturesque setting in southern Austria near the town of Klagenfurt, by the popular Lake Wörthersee – also known as Lake Wörth or Lake Maria Wörth – the clinic (which is currently housed in a temporary location down the road from the original property which is being refurbished) offers all the five-star comforts you'd expect, but in a pared down way. The Alpine setting with the pretty lake – which is ideal for daytime distractions if visiting over the summer – offers an instantly relaxing environment to find yourself in, with plenty of fresh mountain air filling the lungs with wholesome goodness, only enhanced by the quiet and soothing ambience consciously created within the clinic.

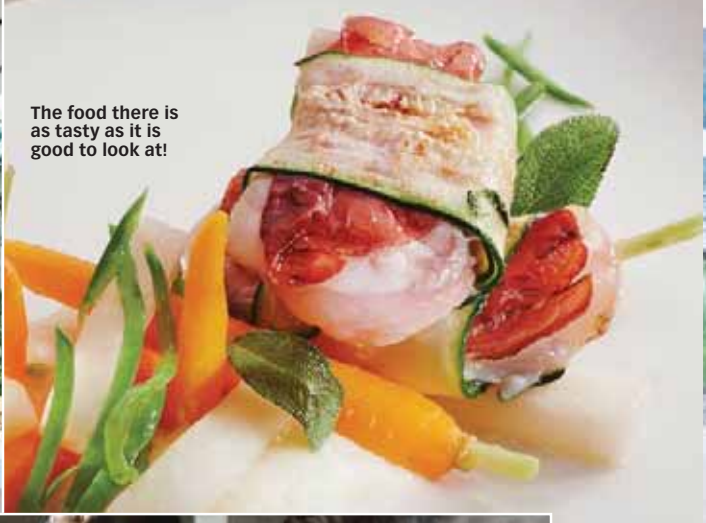
Each person's treatment is customised according to their individual issues – when I was visiting, I saw people tackling everything from obesity and breast cancer recovery, to a regular annual health reboot – after an initial medical consultation. Thereafter, your daily schedule is drawn up, including a variety of tests, treatments, consultations and medication, as well as the diet plan you are required to follow during your stay. The cure, as the insiders refer to it, is conducted in a truly holistic way, combining diet, therapy, rest and gentle exercise. Tests can range from applied kinesiology – which helps diagnose food intolerances – to more in-depth blood tests, while treatments are as varied as colonic irrigation, to nasal reflex therapy, electrolysis foot bath, and massages. But, massages with an ulterior motive – whether it's shiatsu, abdominal or reflexology, it is all designed with one singular goal in mind, to rid the body of all the nasties it has accumulated over the years. Any relaxation benefits you might get from the massage is a pure bonus!

Contrary to what many might think, a stint at Viva Mayr isn't about fasting and starvation. Yes, in some extreme cases, one might be put on a grueling schedule of well, gruel, and little else. But for most who are in average health, there is definitely food involved. Food that is balanced in every sense, artfully presented, and best enjoyed solitary while chewing mindfully in the pristine, stylish dining room.

In fact, with digestion being the very pivot of the entire therapeutic system – they believe that >>



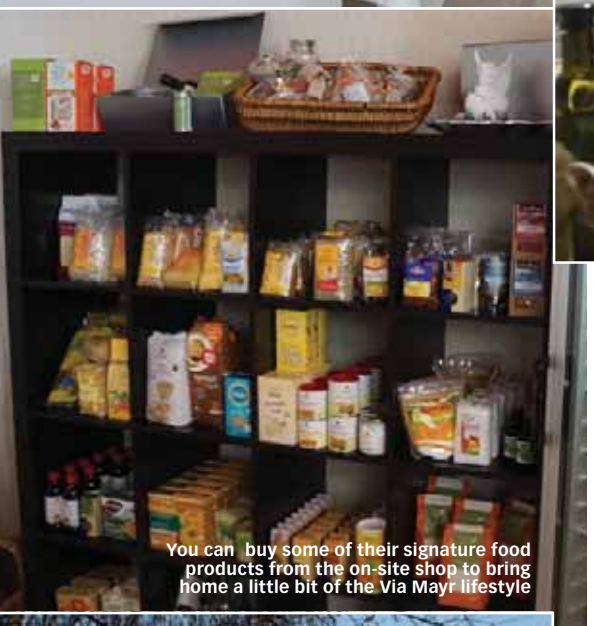
Meals, while ultra-healthy, are served in a gourmet fashion



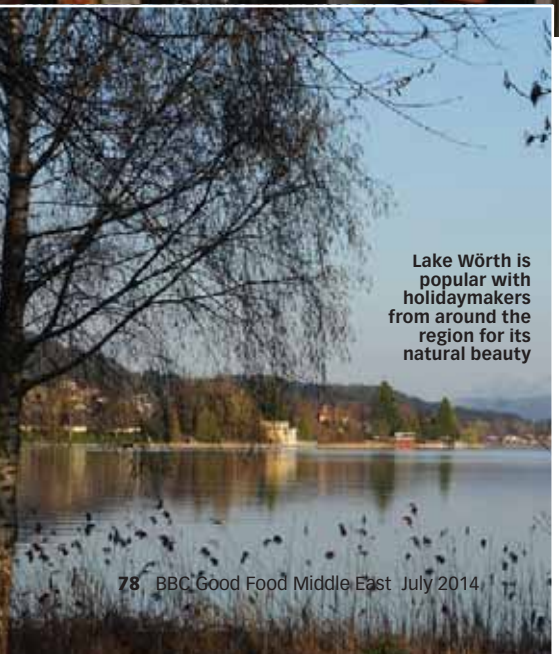
The food there is as tasty as it is good to look at!



Cooking classes offer an insight into the Viva Mayr cuisine



You can buy some of their signature food products from the on-site shop to bring home a little bit of the Via Mayr lifestyle



Lake Wörth is popular with holidaymakers from around the region for its natural beauty

optimum health starts in the kitchen – food plays a very important role here. A lot of research and nutritional analysis has gone into developing the Viva Mayr diet, which focuses not only on what you eat, but also how and when you eat it. The food, while on the austere side, is surprisingly delicious – think basil and Rocca soup with parsley whiting and celeriac ragout and potatoes; and potato rosti with steamed veg and Swiss chard – and also filling.

A lot of emphasis is placed on the acid-alkaline balance in food, with the daily menus always including a base soup and most patients being given a base powder, alongside other relevant supplements, to consume through the day. Based on the premise that most modern diets are acid-centric (meat, pulses, and dairy products are all acidic, while potatoes, vegetables, milk and cream, cold pressed oils, among others count as alkaline foods), it is important to alkalise the body to promote optimum digestion. However, it isn't a blanket approach to eating vegetables, as, they also profess that the body's digestive system starts slowing down as the day progresses, so advise against eating raw food after 4pm. So, if you thought that you were doing yourself a favour by eating a big salad at dinnertime – salads are healthy, right? – maybe that's exactly what is causing that undue bloating in your stomach. In fact, for some people, they recommend avoiding raw food altogether – again, busting myths about what we traditionally consider healthy – as the gut may not be able to digest it properly. So, it's never a one-size-fits-all approach to good health, but rather, taking a long hard look at an individual's lifestyle, body, and diet, then giving it all a good cleanse to start over afresh, so the body can start absorbing the nutrients it needs from food.

A typical day at Viva Mayr starts with a drink of Epsom salt and water (to enable elimination – expect to have to run to the bathroom quite frequently), and is packed with various treatments, doctors' appointments and lab tests, punctuated with bouts of rest – frequent naps are encouraged and popular with most guests, as it is common to feel tired once the detox process starts – and three meals. For those who are on a relatively less intense programme, breakfast is usually bread – Viva Mayr is very food intolerance-friendly, and there are multiple gluten-free bread options (the buckwheat was my favourite!) as well as lactose-free options for those who need it – along with a


Pool with a view

MAYR MANTRAS

The Stossier doctors' 3 golden rules of eating right:

- Eat slowly and mindfully, consciously chewing every bite at least 40 times.
- Keep sufficient gaps between meals, giving your body enough time to digest the food.
- Drink plenty of water and fluids – but never with your food.

protein source, which could be anything from a beautiful fresh white sheep's cheese, to a delicious avocado mousse, or if you're lucky, even a soft boiled egg or omelette. Lunch is the main meal, with gourmet fish or vegetable options, plus soup of the day, while dinner is the smallest meal, just soup with bread and some form of a protein supplement again such as a cheese spread. Meal times are spaced well apart, with dinner service being completed by 7pm, and there is no snacking – just an endless supply of herbal tea and a light vegetable broth that you can drink if you get hungry between mealtimes. Surprisingly, I didn't, at any point during my stay.

Everything is made fresh, and from scratch in their kitchens every day, using seasonal, local, mostly organic ingredients, delicately flavoured with herbs and spices, and that comes through quite clearly in the taste – whether it's the Styrian sheep curd cheese spread, or a simple sweet potato soup, it's always delicious. And the kitchen staff are very happy to welcome you into their world, with cooking classes offered as an optional activity during your stay. I found them to be a great way to take home some real skills that can help sustain the Mayr way of eating, to whatever extent possible. And to learn exactly how easy it is to cook like this way. Steaming, poaching, light frying, braising, grilling and the usage of herbs and spices, along with good quality ingredients can go a long way in making healthy food taste good.

LIFE LESSONS

In fact, learning is very much a part of the Viva Mayr experience. There is an abundance of knowledge and information on wellness available to everyone, from all sorts of sources – whether it's the doctors, or even the massage therapists and restaurant staff. Not only does everyone believe in the philosophy, they also practice it in their own lives. And I don't think there can be a better advertisement for the clinic than the staff – everyone a picture of good health, all fit and trim, boasting glowing skin, and generally cheery. And why not? Basically rooted in common sense and science, once you start to understand what they are advocating – the penny literally drops, and it all makes sense. You think, "But of course, that's exactly how I should be eating. Why did no one tell me that before?"

But, they allow that realisation to come naturally to you. The approach to health here isn't military – while everyone has their tailored schedule to follow, there is no policing. What you choose to do in between your appointments – the charms of the pretty little two-street holiday town, Portschach, are at your doorstep after all! – and how strictly you follow the regime, and what you take away from it, is entirely up to you. You are gently nudged towards wellness every step of the way however – whether it's in the carafes filled with mineralised stones for drinking water from, provided in each of the well-appointed rooms, or the supporting programmes that are offered, ranging from yoga and Nordic walking, to the afore-mentioned cooking classes.

I met people planning to continue on the Viva Mayr diet for several weeks after leaving, as well as returning guests who, in just a year, had slid back to suffering from the same problems as before, admittedly due to lapsing back to their old lifestyles. But what they all have in common is an unerring faith in what a stint here can do. As do I. I slept deeply and long, voluntarily waking up early in the morning, feeling refreshed – not having to drag myself out of bed as I usually do. My skin, at the risk of sounding clichéd, looked and felt clearer and brighter in just a couple of days – something no number of facials has been able to achieve in all these years. I didn't lose much weight when I weighed myself before leaving, but I definitely felt lighter, less bloated and more energised – and my clothes were all sitting a little less snug. Just as I was leaving, an attendant said to me, a lot of people lose weight after they leave from here. I didn't believe him. I haven't weighed myself since (don't really believe much in it). But I can honestly say, months later, I continue to feel lighter and slimmer – and the ultimate proof lay in a recent shopping trip when I ended up having to buy clothes one size smaller!

But, as the Viva Mayr team will be at pains to tell anyone, they are not about weight loss – that is just a by-product of the process. The real benefits lie in cleansing your body, gaining a deeper understanding how it works and how you can treat it better, and learning to make a few simple changes to your lifestyle so that you can continue to feel and look better, from the inside out.

TRAVEL DIARY

GETTING THERE: The nearest airport is Klagenfurt, which is reachable with a connecting flight from Vienna; Emirates airline and Austrian airlines both offer direct flights. From Klagenfurt, the clinic is about a 40-minute drive away. Alternatively, you can also opt to drive or take the train from Vienna.

STAYING THERE: Room rates start from about €210 (around Dhs1,040) per night, including all meals, but since this isn't exactly an ordinary hotel, pricing is usually worked out on a package basis. The initial medical consultation charges start from €165, with treatment prices ranging from as little as €17 to over €400. The minimum stay recommended here is one week, and it is certainly expensive, but most consider it to be a worthwhile investment in their wellbeing. Find out more from www.viva-mayr.com.

A culinary showdown

All the action from last month's action-packed Samsung's Aspiring Chef competition in association with BBC Good Food Middle East event.

June 14 was an exciting day in the calendar of Dubai's foodies – after weeks of rounding up entries from amateur chefs from all walks of life, the Samsung Aspiring Chef competition in association with BBC Good Food ME came to a culinary crescendo at the fantastic facilities of the School of Culinary & Finishing Arts (SCAFA). Eight very talented finalists, who were selected on the basis of the recipes they submitted online as their entry, battled it out to see who could take home this title, and the prizes that came with it. With their supporters and other audience members cheering them on throughout, and plenty of other fun activities and giveaways for everyone, it was an enjoyable day for everyone!



The judges, **BBC Good Food ME editor Sudeshna Ghosh; Blogger and culinary instructor Dima Sharif; and SCAFA chef Cristobal Ruiz,** had a tough task on their hands, with the high standards displayed by most of the contestants. From chef-style presentation, to dishes that pack a flavour punch, it was all there!



The competition was split into two rounds of heats, when the contestants were given a mystery box of ingredients each, to create something original with. The winner from each round then cooked off against each other in the grand finale, where they were required to replicate a recipe created by SCAFA culinary instructor and competition judge, Chef Cristobal Ruiz — a complex nut-crusted salmon dish, with a red pepper sauce and vegetable quinoa.



Photographs: ANAS CHERUR



The culinary day was peppered throughout with other activities such as a cookery demonstration by chef Cristobal, who showcased a beautiful garden salad that literally looks like a garden!



Saied El Hakim emerged the winner in this closely contested battle, as his dish was the closest in taste and presentation to the original. The raft of prizes he got to take home include a Samsung refrigerator, a cookery course at SCAFA, and a recipe book with BBC Good Food ME (distributed free with this issue). The other finalist, Andrea, didn't leave empty-handed, with a Samsung microwave being given away as a first runner-up prize.







The afternoon saw two of the UAE's top bloggers, Sally Prosser (Mycustardpie.com) and Arva Ahmad (I live in a frying pan), conduct an interactive talk session on the highs and lows of blogging.







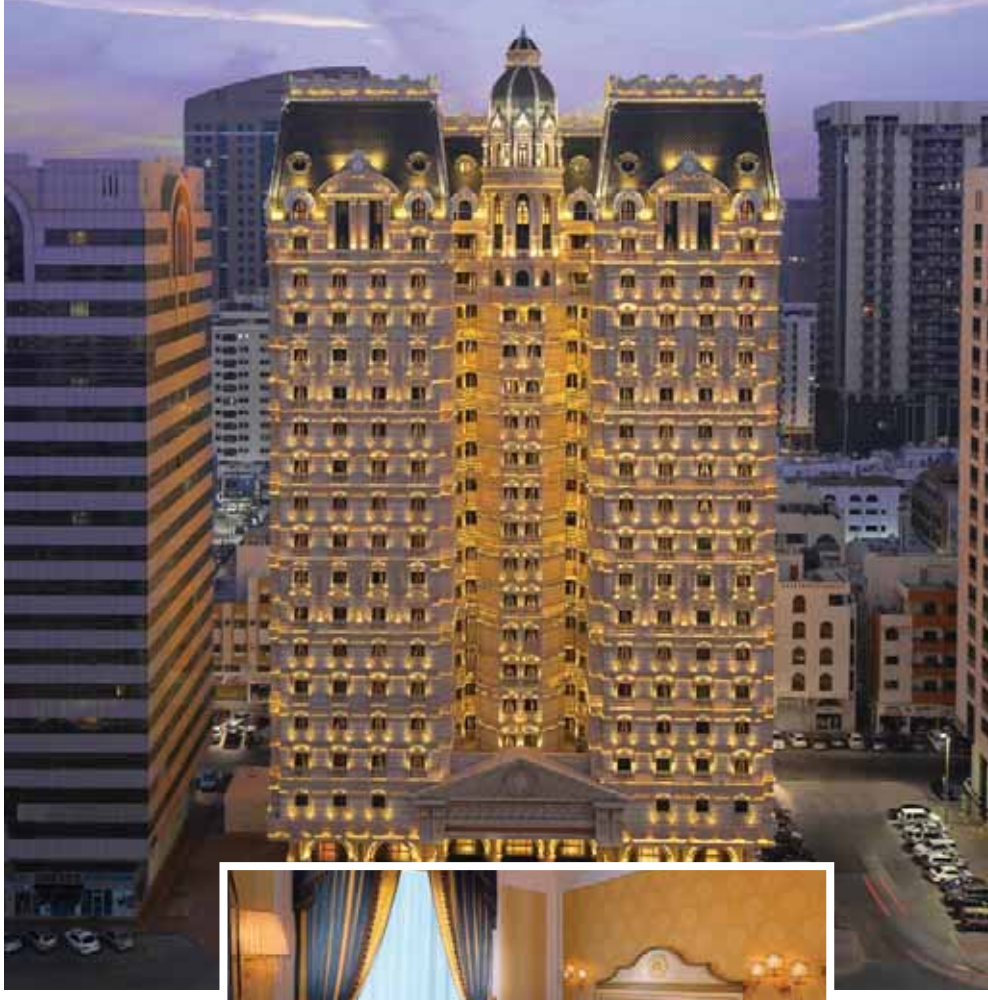
Samsung appliances were given away to two lucky raffle draw winners, while another walked away with a dinner voucher for the restaurant at SCAFA.





WIN!

A relaxing weekend break at **Royal Rose Abu Dhabi**, worth **Dhs7,500**



One lucky winner can get a two-night getaway, inclusive of all meals and spa treatments.





Royal Rose Abu Dhabi is a new hotel nestled in the business district of the capital. Escape to this first five-star hotel, and flagship property, from City Seasons Hotels Group, which resembles a 17th century French palace, to enjoy a luxurious weekend break. Dining options include the Brasserie Café, the all-day dining restaurant Printania, and the signature restaurant, Barocco, which serves Mediterranean cuisine with French flair. Take a dip in the pool, or relax with a rejuvenating spa treatment, where your relaxation is guaranteed.

One lucky winner and a partner can enjoy a two-night stay in a luxury suite, as well as breakfast, lunch, a five-course dinner at Barocco, two 60-minute spa treatments, and VIP amenities.

Log on bbcgoodfoodme.com to enter this competition and simply answer this question:

How many dining outlets does Royal Rose Abu Dhabi have?

Scan this QR code to go straight to our website.

*Terms & conditions apply. Employees of CPI Media Group are not eligible to enter. Winners will be selected on random basis from correct entries.

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WIN!

An unforgettable **beach vacation** in **Thailand** with **Amari Hua Hin**, worth **Dhs8,500**

One lucky winner can escape for a family holiday at Amari Hua Hin, Thailand, to enjoy a four-night stay, with breakfast, spa treatments, dinner and water park tickets.

Get ready for the ultimate summer getaway with the family at Amari Hua Hin, nestled near the shimmering Gulf of Thailand. Located just two and a half hours from Bangkok, the resort combines the luxury of Thai hospitality with a serene beachside destination, boasting contemporary décor and verdant tropical gardens.

The centrally located resort is fronted by the popular Khao Takiab beach, and is a ten-minute drive away from Hua Hin's downtown area, with the Cicada Market, Hua Hin Vineyard, and the Night Market, just some of the popular hotspots located nearby. Within the resort, spend time by the swimming pool or at the Discover Breeze Spa, and sate your hunger pangs at the five restaurants and bars including Mosaic (all-day dining), Coral Lounge (lobby bar), Reef Deli and Wine Lounge, Shoreline Beach Club (beach bar) and Aqua (pool bar).

One winner can enjoy this amazing Thai family getaway package absolutely free – the prize includes stay at the Family Suite, overlooking the hillside or pool, for two adults and two children, plus two signature massages, daily breakfast, complimentary seafood platter at Shoreline Beach Club, dinner, water park tickets, and access to the Kids Club.

Log on bbcgoodfoodme.com to enter this competition and simply answer this question:

What beach is the Amari Hua Hin resort located by?

Scan this QR code to go straight to our website.

*Terms & conditions apply. Flights are not included in this prize. Employees of CPI Media Group are not eligible to enter. Winners will be selected on random basis from correct entries.

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This Abu Dhabi hotel's restaurants include LaPiazza, Harvesters Pub, Chequers, Tipar Bar, Cappucino Royal Café and Pool Corner.
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SHANG THAI RESTAURANT
An authentic Thai restaurant in Jumeirah.
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www.shang-thai.com

TILAL LIWA HOTEL
Located amidst secluded dunes off the Rub Al Khali desert, the hotel's resturants are Al Badiya, Layali Bar, and Al Liwan.
Discount: 25% off F&B outlets
www.danathotels.com

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Visit **www.bbcgoodfoodme.com** and sign up today.

Competitions

Fabulous dining experiences up for grabs this month!



WIN! DINING VOUCHERS FROM PING PONG, WORTH DHS1,500.
Three lucky winners can get their hands on a Dhs500 dining voucher to feast on a wide selection of dim sum at this well-loved Asian restaurant chain. Tantalise your tastebuds with dumplings, fluffy buns, crispy fried rolls, and mocktails, bubble iced tea or hydrating flowering teas, to beat the summer heat.

WIN! IFTAR VOUCHERS FROM ALMAZ BY MOMO, WORTH DHS1,500.
Three lucky winners can get their hands on a Dhs500 voucher each, to take a dining partner along to this Maghrebin-style cuisine restaurant. Indulge in Arabic and North African dishes at the open Iftar buffet for a traditional Moroccan experience.





WIN! IFTAR VOUCHERS FOR TWO FROM THE MARKET PLACE, JW MARRIOT HOTEL DUBAI, WORTH OVER DHS1,300.
Two lucky winners get to take a friend along to this Iftar, and indulge in a selection of authentic Arabic treats, Ramadan beverages, and a plethora of dishes from live cooking stations, as well as the extensive buffet spread.



WIN! IFTAR VOUCHER FOR TWO FROM THE MARKET PLACE, MARRIOTT HOTEL AL JADAF, WORTH OVER DHS1,200.
An international Iftar with traditional Arabic delights awaits two winners at this restaurant. Take a friend along and feast on mouthwatering dishes, before ending the meal with a selection of Arabic sweets for a lovely Ramadan experience.

WIN! RAMADAN AT THE TOWERS PACKAGE FOR TWO, FROM JUMEIRAH ETIHAD TOWERS, WORTH DHS1,200.
One lucky winner can take their partner to stay at a Deluxe room at this lavish hotel in Abu Dhabi. The package includes Iftar, transfers to and from the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, in-room Suhoor, and access to the hotel facilities.





WIN! IFTAR VOUCHERS FROM OCEAN BASKET, MIRDIFF CITY CENTRE, WORTH DHS1,200.
Four dining vouchers, worth Dhs300 each, are up for grabs! Ocean Basket, the South African family seafood restaurant is the place to head to for dishes such as grilled lemon and garlic butter drenched prawns, fresh fish, sushi, and a selection of other Mediterranean treats.

To stand a chance to win these prizes, visit our competitions page on www.bbcgoodfoodme.com, or simply scan this QR code with your mobile to go directly to the website, and answer the simple questions.

*Terms & conditions apply. Employees of CPI Media Group and entrants below 21 years old are not eligible to enter. Winners will be selected on random basis from correct entries.

Meet the blogger

Helping you connect to the UAE'S foodie community, one blog post at a time.



PR consultant at bespoke luxury management firm RR & Co., **NOREEN WASTI** lives in DIFC with her husband. The 28-year old American of Pakistani heritage is the founder of a culinary and lifestyle blog, Nonisplace.com – Noni is her childhood nickname. She settled here in Dubai last year after getting married, having been travelling back and forth between US and Dubai prior to her move. Noreen loves entertaining over weekends, arts and crafts, and DIY projects.

About the blog

I was working in PR for luxury brands and started to feel drained from the lack of creativity and meaningfulness involved in the job. Food has always been a passion of mine since I was a little girl and I was struggling to maintain that passion. I started **Nonisplace.com** as a true outlet for my aesthetic inclinations and it became such a big part of me. I try and focus on various aspects of food from an entertaining angle covering topics such as how to make the perfect cheese plate or the proper way to set a table. Readers can also find a selection of international recipes on my blog.

Secret ingredient



Almond meal! Whenever I make desserts that involve a crust, I sneak a bit of almond meal into the dough to give it texture and nuttiness.

I love street food and believe you can learn so much about culinary traditions from street vendors and stalls. The sights, smells and sounds are such an inspiration and seeing how different cultures use everyday ingredients is so fascinating.

I could snack on **baguette** and **butter** all day!

My 10-minute meal

Wild mushroom, caramelised onion and goat cheese frittata. Whenever I am pressed for time, eggs are my go to. It's hearty enough to fill you up and easy enough to keep thing stress free. I love to have frittata with farmers toast and sliced avocado on top.



I'm a cheese lover!

There are so many different varieties and ways to eat it. An elegant cheese plate is my go-to appetiser when entertaining as well. Most times I crave Humboldt fog (a soft goat's cheese with an ash rind only produced in Humboldt County, California) – it's divine on a cracker with a drizzle of honey.

Culinary icons

The American chef and restaurateur, Grant Achatz – he's one of the leaders in molecular gastronomy. One of the most unforgettable dining experiences I have ever had was at his restaurant Alinea in Chicago.

I'd love to dine with...

Anthony Bourdain. He knows his food, so I would probably be terrified to cook for him. But if I had to make something, it would be duck confit ravioli with shaved black summer truffles.

Favourite food culture

Mediterranean – from Spanish to Turkish. There is such a strong focus on quality produce as vegetables and herbs are in every meal. I love their use of yoghurts and cheeses. There is also a sharing tradition to the cuisine, which gives such a hospitable and inviting feeling.



Text by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

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